CHIFFON'S MARRIAGE

BY

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THE COUNTESS DE MARTEL-JANVILLE.

CHIFFON'S MARRIAGE

BY

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Translated from the French

BY

MRS. EDWARD LEES COFFEY

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To

MADAME MAURICE BARRÈS,

THIS WORK

IS

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CHIFFON'S MARRIAGE.

CHAPTER I.

"WIFE of an officer! What an occupation? I would rather be an orderly in a Lyceum!"

The Marchioness de Bray shrugged her shoulders: "When you know what officer is in question——"

"Though it should be M. de Trêne, that every one thinks so distinguished, I would not think of it."

"You would not wish it, indeed! You have no right to be so hard to please, for——"

"'Your father has left only debts and you have not a cent.' Ah! I am accustomed to this from you, you say it so often I can never forget it."

"Well, then?"

"Very well; even though I have not a cent, I will never marry without love."

M. de Bray said with some timidity: "Without being rich you have some expectations—probably a fortune."

"A fortune?" the child repeated with astonishment—"a fortune that you may give me?"

Her soft gray eyes under long, thick brown lashes rested affectionately upon her stepfather.

Mme. de Bray said angrily: "It is useless to teach her what she need not know; it will only make her more difficult to please."

"How difficult?" Coryse answered with indignation; "difficult in what? I was only sixteen a few months ago, and no one has asked me in marriage that I know of."

"If some one should ask you—and you refuse before knowing who?"

"I don't wish to marry an officer, never! I see the officers' wives here; there are plenty of them in the four regiments. I would not be in their place for anything. I am not like them—not polite enough. I know that if my colonel had a wife like Mme. de Bassigny for example, I would not visit her, nothing would induce me!" Looking toward the end

of the room to find an ally, she said: "Am I not right, Uncle Marc?"

Without giving him time to reply, Mme. de Bray said: "That is not your uncle's affair. Will you listen to me an instant?" In solemn tones she said: "The Duke d'Aubières has asked you in marriage."

She stopped a moment to see the effect upon her daughter. The little baby face seemed stupefied. Mme. de Bray understood this expression to be joy, and with a triumphant air asked her decision.

"Why, I am only a child!" and without seeming to notice her mother's anger she said: "Yes! he is at least forty,—he must be as he is colonel; he is ugly, and they say has very little money."

The marchioness, looking scornfully at her daughter, said: "This is enough. She wishes a fortune also!"

Leaning her blonde head forward, Coryse answered: "Oh no! the money is nothing, as I am not to be duke—duchess, I would say. It is ridiculous, a big title and small fortune. If I had been born rich I would not hide it though it would bore me, and I would bear

my title, as it would not be my fault. It is not for this reason that I now say no; it is principally on account of the man."

"But you have said a hundred times that the Duke d'Aubières was charming, and that you liked him so much."

"Certainly, I like him very much! but not to marry him. First, he is old, and to spend a life with him would indeed be funny."

The marchioness, looking angrily at her husband, said: "One does not marry to be funny."

"Well, I will marry in my own way."

"Why, this child is crazy! I had better go away;" rising to go in a way she thought very noble, but really ridiculous, the marchioness left the room with long strides.

When the door was shut with a great noise, M. de Bray said quietly: "You are wrong, my little Coryse."

Coryse was calmed by her mother's noisy exit and threw herself in a big old chair covered with faded silk in which she almost disappeared. Looking up she said:

"Why do you call me Coryse? Why not Chiffon? You, too, are angry with me."

"No, I am not angry, but——"

"If you are angry I see the reason, and what will you say if I am short with you?"

"Oh, nothing. I will say no more, I know you will say you are wrong."

"Wrong about what?"

"To discuss matters in this way with your mother."

"Why should they marry me without my consent?—without defending myself?"

"I did not say that."

"Then what did you say?"

"You can discuss, but in a different tone. Your language exasperates your mother."

"Yes! I know it; she loves a noble style!"

All the tenderness and beauty disappeared from her eyes, and she said in harsh tones: "She is so distinguished—she!"

M. de Bray answered sadly: "You give me much anxiety, Coryse."

"Oh, papa, I would not give you pain for the world! I love you so much!"

"I too love you!"

"Then why do you wish to send me away and marry me at any risk?"

"But I do not wish this."

"You know that I am only sixteen and a half years old; let me beg you to allow me to live here a while longer"—counting on her fingers—"for five years, not quite five, and then I will go, I promise you."

The soft gray eyes were troubled, and big tears like glass beads fell on her fresh cheeks.

Corysande d'Avesnes, whom they called Coryse, or generally Chiffon, was a young girl robust in figure, but baby-like and with many of the angularities of childhood—a clear skin full of rose-light. Her movements were easy though not always graceful, like a young dog.

Mme. de Bray was full of vanity, looking down upon many she met socially as inferior beings. She assumed always a scornful air to those around her. The Count d'Avesnes had the cleverness to die in two years, and thus escaped an almost impossible existence at home. His wife was left without fortune and went with her child to the house of an uncle and aunt, who adored Coryse and took care of her until the second marriage of her mother. Madame d'Avesnes was rarely at home; she travelled constantly, visiting friends or in Paris.

It was on one of these visits to Pont-sur-Sarthe that she met M. de Bray. He was wealthy and charming: she had become a little *passée* and knew that her beauty was going. She was therefore resigned to reign at Pont-sur-Sarthe, as she could not shine elsewhere, and she married M. de Bray, declaring that it was from devotion to her child and to assure her future.

Then began for the poor husband this uncomfortable existence, made up of reproaches and silences—painful scenes which his predecessor had suffered and also the Uncle and Aunt de Launay, who bore it all for love of their little Chiffon, whom they feared to lose.

It was for her daughter that Mme. de Bray reserved her worst bickerings. The nature of the child was contrary to her own ideas, narrow from one point of view and large from another. Prepossessed with a love for the nobility, and money too, since she got it, and loving above all display, she could not pardon the simplicity of her daughter, and her straightforwardness was an enigma. Being of no certain type, she tried to create

one; she learned to speak from the theatres and to think from novels; having at bottom no really fine thoughts, she applied badly the borrowed ones. When for example she wished to be tragic, she was so ridiculous that Chiffon could not suppress screams of laughter.

Although her own appearance was rather vulgar, yet she constantly reproached her daughter that she had not even the distinction of the d'Avesnes.

When Coryse began to cry, M. de Bray was completely overcome and tried his best to comfort her: "Come, my little Chiffon, be reasonable, it will all be right."

She replied by shaking her head with discouragement.

"That will be arranged, I suppose, by marrying M. d'Aubières. I could not do better, if I did not feel that in marrying him I would be doing a very wrong thing and making him unhappy. But for this I would let them be rid of me at once."

"It is wrong of you to say that to me!"

"It is not for you that I say it, and you know it."

"But your mother is not more anxious for you to go than I am."

"Ah, you know differently. She is dreadfully afraid that I will not marry, and above all make a fine match; not for my happiness — that is nothing; but to satisfy her own vanity, to excite the jealousy of all the people in Pont-sur-Sarthe, for nothing else."

"I am distressed to hear you talk so of your mother."

"I cannot restrain the impulse, I must say what I think!"

"Exactly, but you should not think in this way."

"How can I help this? Do you think she really loves me? Before you came to this house she scolded me all the while, or accused others of spoiling me. But for you and Uncle and Aunt de Launay, I would have had no one to care for me! Twice a year she kissed me, when she went away and came back, and this was done at the door for the benefit of the servants—'O my Corysande! my beloved child!'—a little melodrama for outsiders." Then with a little laugh she

added: "You know that she has always lacked simplicity."

"You exaggerate her defects."

"You should not say so, you who are so natural and simple."

"It pleases you to thwart your mamma in little things——"

"'Your mamma!' Take care, she may hear you."

As M. de Bray looked toward the door, she said:

"You are afraid!" and with a solemn voice, "to have forgotten that mamma is a good name for common people, for the concierge; the well-bred speak differently."

"Since your mother has the little weakness of making this an important matter, why not gratify her?"

"I do nothing else. In speaking to her I never call her mamma, but in speaking of her I always say my mother; a mouth full but heart empty. Ah! it is not my fault! I have tried since you replaced my poor papa, and you have been so good and kind to the ugly little girl who did not want to see you—I have loved you so dearly since I knew you

that to give you pleasure I have tried to love your wife, but this is impossible!"

"This speech is abominable!"

"Why! I am attached to her in a certain way. I would be distressed if anything happened to her, and I only wish her happiness; but when I am not with her, positively I breathe better."

Seeing the unhappy expression of her stepfather she added, "Don't you know that I have never said this to any one but to you?"

"Happy thing!" muttered the poor stunned man.

"It is true! I have confidence only in you." As she looked over her shoulder she saw the Count de Bray, who was sitting in a wicker chair, so she added, "In Uncle Marc too. Why don't you speak, Uncle Marc?"

Uncle Marc, a big, tall, elegant fellow, replied in a singing voice: "Because I have nothing to say. When I have spoken before, your mother has silenced me. Therefore——"

"That's true, but as she is not here——"

"Well, as that is so, I will say that you have spoken the truth, my poor Chiffon; and as I cannot sustain you in it, I say nothing."

"How good you are!"

"Oh, excellent! but let me be quiet now, little tease," and rising quickly, he pushed Coryse away, who was climbing on his knee like a little baby.

She asked him in the most surprised way why he had treated her in this manner.

"Because you are too big for such monkey tricks—at your age! Is this good manners?"

"How manners! Can I never get on your knee again?" and with a funny expression, "Ah! if you were not my uncle!"

Marc de Bray replied peevishly: "That is true, I am not!"

"Oh, how wicked you are to say that!" throwing herself on the sofa she buried her face in the cushions and sobbed.

"Oh! what is the matter with the little one? She cries now about everything—I cannot bear it."

"Be a little indulgent," his brother said. "She is in bad spirits about her marriage."

"I quite understand that!"

"Take care that she does not hear you. She will send poor Aubières to the devil forever!"

"Very well! You are not going to allow this unnatural union, are you?"

"Her mother wishes it so much!"

"She is foolish! Aubières is twenty-five years older than Chiffon!"

"Well, the little Liron adores you, and she is twenty years younger."

"I will admit that she adores me to-day, but to-morrow?"

"I can also remind you of our mother, who was twenty-five years younger than her husband and yet adored him passionately."

"Such cases are rare, yet Chiffon is not happy, and that is quite plain." He went over to the divan, and putting his arm around her rosy neck he said affectionately: "I ask pardon, Chiffon, for giving you pain."

She raised her eyes and said: "Why were you so wicked—to say that you were not my uncle?"

"Because, although I love you as much, yet I am not. I am the brother of the husband of your mother; I am nothing to you. I could marry you—if I was not the age of d'Aubières that you have sent off."

"Oh!" the child answered, stupefied, "you

the age of M. d'Aubières? You are not as shrunken as he, as the men say at Pont-sur-Sarthe. The other day I was talking in the street with a man who said that to me, to explain that his wife, was a little *passee.*"

"What!" the marquis said, "you have talked in the street with a man! What man?"

"A good man that I met returning from my ride with old John. I think he was a sweeper or a rag-picker."

"Oh, if your mother knew this!"

"Yes, I know what she would say, but she did not see me," and turning suddenly to her Uncle Marc she asked him, "Are you my Uncle Marc or not? Five years I have called you uncle, and I believe you are. Papa is papa, is he not? Then you can give me advice. Shall I or shall I not marry M. d'Aubières?"

"Now, that is a very embarrassing question."

"Well, if you were in my place, what would you do?"

"In your place—I would wait."

"It is precisely because I am waiting that——"

"Before saying no, I would see him sometimes and reflect."

"Ah! you think seeing him oftener would change my mind? I think the contrary."

"Aubières is clever, he is good and well born; he cannot fail to improve on longer acquaintance; without being rich he has a nice fortune and an historic name."

"Oh, I know that he is historic. I have heard that so often, but I have an historic name also; one is not apt to long for things they have, but those they have not."

"What is it you wish?"

She thought a moment and said firmly: "Much love—or if that is impossible, much money! There would not be a poor person in Pont-sur-Sarthe; do you see? Then I would buy pictures and beautiful horses; and I would have a concert every night. Ah! no one would be bored in my house."

"Bored! if your mother heard you!"

"Yes, but she does not hear me!"

A servant opened the door. "The marchioness wishes to speak to the marquis before dinner, and also to the count, and wishes Miss Coryse to go and dress."

"Dress!" Coryse said; "is she to have company?" Then turning with a laugh to her step-father and uncle, "This is for d'Aubières, and she wants us to make an impression. Go quickly, and I will put on my old pink dress; it is less pretty and more soiled than this, but it is for the evening."

She looked at M. de Bray, who went out followed by his brother, and with eyes full of tears she murmured: "Never mind! it is hard that the two beings who really love me are nothing, nothing to me."

When her step-father turned to reply, she repeated, "'The only two!' This is not exactly right; I forgot Uncle Albert and Aunt Matilda, and they are something to me!"

All at once taken with a sudden idea, she ran quickly under her father's arm, who still held the knob of the door, and laughingly she said: "I dine with them this evening. Tell my mother if she has forgotten it," and she ran down the steps.

CHAPTER II.

CHIFFON bounded up to her room, threw a hat upon her blonde head, and in going into the office met old John, who was putting on a pair of cotton gloves, with oaths. They were too narrow for his big hands.

"Be quick! Come along and take me to my Aunt Matilda's."

"My young lady, you forget we have company at home to dinner, and I must open the door; they are arriving now."

"Oh, you will have time. You can get back soon, and we will run all the way."

"Ah, can we run in this heat? That would be very ladylike to run."

He finished putting on his gloves. Coryse took him by the arm, hurrying him along quickly. The good man, holding out his fingers with admiration, asked if she had permission?

"Oh, I am going without it. Come along."

"I guess you have told the truth,—you have not."

"But if I have, from papa?"

"Oh, that does not mean anything, the permission of the marquis."

In going across the dining-room she stopped suddenly, looking at the covers. "There are several to dine; I thought M. d'Aubières was the only one."

She asked John where he was going.

"To get my helmet, which is hanging up in the saddle-room. I will soon catch up to you."

He joined Coryse, who got over the ground with long strides, and began to walk behind her. All at once she turned back and asked him if he knew M. d'Aubières?

"Do you like him, John?"

"I think he is a fine colonel!"

"They want me to marry him!"

The old coachman's comic face made the little girl laugh,—"It cannot be true; he is old enough to be your father!"

"That makes no difference; they want it. It is my mother's wish!"

The good fellow, who knew the tastes of

his mistress, said: "He has a great name, this Duke d'Aubières!"

"Come, John, walk by my side; you give me a stiff neck turning around so often."

"I cannot do that, Miss Coryse; the marchioness has especially forbidden it. She says that I must walk five steps behind when in the street with you."

"That is for others, not for you, who are almost my nurse. We must not have all this etiquette between us—why, we are already here!"

John looked at the old granite house opposite, which threw its dark shadow on the street, and said, heaving a big sigh: "There is a fine house where one can be happy with good masters. Not that I wish to say anything about the marquis—who could be better than he?—but he cannot always do what he wishes, while M. and Mme. de Launay always wish the same thing."

"Are you sorry to have left them?"

"No, Miss Coryse, for I am with you, but when you marry the Duke d'Aubières or some one else, I won't stay long with the marchioness. But I am tired pitying myself

to you in this way, because you are more to be pitied than I am. I can go when I wish, but you cannot."

After a little silence the good fellow, still harping upon the same idea, said: "Do you think Mme. de Launay would take me back? You know I left her to be with you, Miss Coryse, and their horses are not so fat or so shiny as they used to be."

"But you know that you will stay with me always, John, and when I go I will take you with me."

She raised the knocker of the porte cochère and jumped over the big bar. The old coachman leaned toward her with his eyes full of tears:

"What, Miss Coryse! do you wish in your service an old man like me, who is ugly and not stylish?"

"Oh yes, nurse, you please me, and you are true if not handsome."

Letting fall the knocker of the door she called out to him to wait, and in a laughing way, without noticing his terrified expression, said: "You know you will not be too well received at the house."

Chiffon's entrance in the de Launay dining-room was an event,—Aunt Matilda and Uncle Albert jumped up to receive her with delight, and the servant gave a satisfied grunt.

Everybody adored Chiffon in that old house where she had spent her early days, and where she returned whenever she could escape from home. She was ten years old when her mother married the second time and took her from the old couple who had looked upon her as their child. It was a terrible wrench for them, and for the child also, who was alarmed for her future. She was forever scolded by her mother, but petted by the old uncle and aunt from the time she first knew them. Tossed about and teased by successive wheedling and bad treatment from Madame d'Avesnes, Coryse, though gay in disposition, became sad by reflection and lived in a state of perpetual unhappiness.

Seated in her little chair with her eyes fixed upon the portraits of her family in their stiff old-fashioned gowns, she dreamed and thought. She thought it was good to live and to laugh, to roll on the carpet or on the grass so full of sunlight and joy. She thought

it was delightful to talk with the dogs, the horses, the birds, and the flowers. But all this could not last; some day, perhaps to-morrow, you would hear the noise of a carriage, and Uncle Albert would put his arm tenderly around her and say with some embarrassment:

"My little Chiffon, your mother has come for you and you must go and meet her with Claudine."

They never told her of these visits in advance, knowing that she would not eat or sleep. She had many crying spells, but could brace up at the last moment and appear resigned to her fate. She only thought of obeying her uncle, and would take a corner of Claudine's apron and go down with a brave air to meet her mother.

The Breton woman would encourage her in her coarse voice: "Come on, Chiffon, thou must do what is right."

"You must do what is right also, and not say 'thee,' and 'thou' to me—but *miss;* don't forget this."

Certainly these scenes greatly embittered the child. The sight of Aunt Matilda quietly

crying in her room, or a discharged servant dragging her trunk in the hall, was enough to keep her little eyes wide open all night. She was ever expecting the coming of the carriage, even when she played or was looking lovingly at the water and the flowers.

For many years Chiffon had lived happily in this way, but also much preoccupied and not forgetting the bad days past and to come, and always anticipating some rude shock. The announcement of the marriage of her mother was to a degree a matter of indifference, but she became alarmed when she felt that she must leave this old home and the dear old relatives who had reared her. She had seen the Marquis de Bray on horseback with his brother Marc, and she thought him very handsome and distinguished. But the fear that he might be like her mother filled her with alarm. She was perfect mistress of herself and kept her fears from others. When Mme. d'Avesnes announced to her that maternal love alone induced this marriage, and that interest for her future had decided her, Coryse was perfectly silent. When M. de Bray came to visit her mother and wanted to

meet her, she would run off and hide in the bottom of the garden among the bushes.

Pale and with pinched lips she attended the wedding in the cathedral, understanding that the last remembrance of her poor father was gone forever. With this bitterness at heart the little girl went to her new home. M. de Bray loved Chiffon at once, but guessing her thoughts he did not try too hurriedly to prove them. The bad temper of his wife soon brought it about. Disgusted with her noise and tears and insane gestures, these two beings, gay and good, sought each other as a solace, were constantly together, and Chiffon was only happy when near her step-father.

The child tried to hide her terror of her mother, and affected a supercilious, almost impertinent air while her teeth were chattering and knees trembling. One evening she betrayed herself. Followed by her mother in a great passion she took hold of the banisters and slid down suddenly into the library. Thinking she was alone she planted herself against the door, breathless and in an agony, listening for her mother.

Marc de Bray, who lived with his brother,

was smoking in a big chair by a lamp. He spoke softly to the little girl. She went back a little, displeased at being surprised at this moment of weakness.

"Ah, you are there, are you?"

Marc replied: "Yes, Miss Corysande, I am here. Do I disturb you?"

Chiffon, who never lied, said, "Yes, you have seen me frightened, and I don't like that."

He began to laugh, and looked at the child affectionately. "You are really a pretty Chiffon! Were you afraid of a ghost or a cannon-ball? I must tell you that this is unworthy of a descendent of the Avesnes; but your mother! Oh, my child! I am an old and bearded man, and I am afraid of her—so I understand your position."

Coryse with great confidence said: "You don't seem afraid."

"No, I do not seem afraid when she is here; that would give her too much pleasure, but after I displease her I am in a tremble all over. This morning when she attacked poor Joseph I could hardly contain myself, but stifled my feelings and ran into the vesti-

bule." Then becoming serious, he said: "Come, Chiffon, you should tell my brother all these things; yes! you should tell him all your sorrows and fears."

"Uncle Marc, what could he do?"

"Well, he is the master, after all."

Chiffon opened her eyes widely and said, "That is not so!"

Marc de Bray burst out laughing; "Yes, I am not surprised that you think so. Your step-father has a horror of scenes and discussions; he prefers always to yield when the matter concerns himself. When the affair touches you it is quite different. He was your father's friend and loves you dearly." He leaned toward her and added: "I also, little Chiffon, love you tenderly, and if we have not talked of this before, it has been the difficulty of being alone."

When his brother came into the room he said: "Come, Peter, say to Chiffon that we are her friends, and I think this evening she will believe us."

From this moment a great affection opened in the closed heart of the child, and she lived more peacefully.

"How is it that you have come this evening, Chiffon?" her uncle Albert asked; "I thought you had company at home."

She winked at them and made a funny face. "Do you mean M. d'Aubières?" Without giving them time to reply she said: "If you were in my place would you marry M. d'Aubières?".

"Oh, Chiffon!" Aunt Matilda said, timidly, at the same time looking at the servant who brought another plate.

"Oh, that makes no difference! M. d'Aubières is going to propose to me at four o'clock. This evening numbers in the town will know it, and to-morrow my mother will tell the rest. That will look well in Pont-sur-Sarthe; and they say there are eighty thousand inhabitants. This will not prevent its going around the town. You knew it?—that M. d'Aubières wanted to marry me?"

"Yes, we heard it from your mother, who came to tell us and invite us to her house this evening."

"Oh yes, they wish to present him to the family and force me to say yes!"

Her aunt protested, telling her that a pre-

sentation was unnecessary, as she had known him for a long time—since he was in garrison here.

"It was a year ago the first time that Uncle Marc brought him to dinner; he talked all the time about hunting and bored me dreadfully. I was then in short dresses."

"Chiffon, that is a big word for you."

"What! bored? are you so particular, Aunt Matilda?"

"It is you who are not, my dear. Your mother is right—you have the manners of a boy and talk like the children in the streets."

"Indeed, they were the only amusement I had. It is not my fault if I could not find a word to say to my De Lussy cousins, nor to the little daughters of the general who came to lunch with me in silk dresses and curled hair. It was useless for me to try. I leaned on my arms and laughed foolishly at myself because I could not talk. They talked and they tried to teach me, but I did not understand them. It was so funny—they seemed to be playing a comedy. Is it not so, Uncle Albert? Do you see the point?"

"Oh yes, I see it; but eat your beef before it gets cold."

"Oh, this beef is so good! one more thing that they do not have at the house."

"Your mother does not like it, I suppose?"

"Oh, not that; she says it is only for the masses, and that condemns it at once, whether a dish or something else."

"Yes, eat it, it is good."

"Meantime you have given me no advice."

"About what?"

"M. d'Aubières, of course."

"In this case, my child, you should decide for yourself. M. d'Aubières pleases your mother, and it is for you to say if he pleases you."

"I do like him very much, but I have never thought of him in this light."

"You must see him again many times. This will be easy, as he comes so often to your mother's house. You can study him well."

"What must I do when I have studied him well?"

"You will know then how to answer him."

"I will answer him: 'Shut up!' "

"What?"

Chiffon began to laugh.

"Shut up? How funny, Aunt Matilda, to hear you say that! It is a word which means, Go about your business! Do you understand?"

"Do you think that I can understand slang at my age?"

"You say it very well and you sometimes use expressions like 'bored.'"

"I should not say this, I am sorry!"

"Oh no! at these moments I love you best. I like this in M. d'Aubières,—my way of talking does not shock him."

Aunt Matilda then asked her what was the advice of her father and uncle on this question.

"Papa says very little about it; he contents himself with praising M. d'Aubières. Uncle Marc tells me to wait, and then when he thinks that I am not listening, I am crying in a corner."

The old couple exclaimed, "Crying?"

"Put yourselves in my place; if you thought it was all arranged. It was not for that alone—when they thought that I was not

listening they talked about their many friends who adored each other notwithstanding the twenty and twenty-five years' difference in their ages."

"Did they speak of us?"

"No."

"Chiffon, I was eighty-one yesterday, and your aunt is only sixty."

"Ah, you are all right as you are,"—taking the arm of her old uncle to go into the drawing-room.

"I ordered the carriage at half-past eight," Mme. de Lannay said, "and I must go and dress."

"The carriage to go two hundred yards?" She went on, brightly: "I bet that is not your own idea."

"It was your mother who asked us."

"Oh yes, to come in your carriage and show your fine horses. This is to dazzle M. d'Aubières. She always puts her foot in it."

While the De Launays were getting ready to go out, Chiffon, seated in her arm-chair, looked affectionately at the big drawing-room where she used to play. She loved the old Empire furniture covered with Utrecht yel-

low velvet, the little low bookcase of white wood where she often put her playthings; and the beautiful Louis Sixteenth wainscoting so intact and bright with its satyrs and nymphs playing with each other in the woods —Claudine, the nurse, called them "men and women chasing each other on the wall,"— and the old clock with its eagles; and the urns of Sèvres china, charming but tiresome.

Chiffon loved to recall the happy home of her childhood, and when called to go said with emphasis, "It is good to be here!"

On arriving at the Brays' she ran upstairs, saying: "You will tell them that I am dressing. I could not go in as I am; I will wear my old pink dress."

CHAPTER III.

On entering the beautifully lighted room, Coryse stopped and looked with her near-sighted glasses upon the company seated around in a circle. She stopped a moment, uncertain whom she should first address. Then she walked toward an old but distinguished-looking woman, and bowed respectfully to her.

The Countess de Jarville pleased Coryse for many reasons. She thought her aristocratic in spite of her modest air, and believed her to be intelligent and good. Madame de Bray hated this old woman, a distant relative of her husband, who was not an ornament in her rooms with her pale face and faded gowns. This hatred was enough to give Chiffon a sympathy for her.

"Corysande, come here," her mother said in a commanding tone—"Come and speak to Madame de Bassigny."

Madame de Bassigny was the wife of a colonel, and Chiffon's horror. She was a rich but affected woman who tried to vex and humiliate all the military people in Pont-sur-Sarthe, and punish the officers who neglected her reception day.

The little girl replied to her mother with indifference and said that she would come when she had spoken to Mme. de Jarville.

The marchioness looked at her daughter with her most furious expression, while M. d'Aubière's good blue eyes were filled with admiration and love. He also detested the wife of his colleague, and he was delighted at Chiffon's coolness to her. This thin woman, who he said had a beak in her elbow and a stoop in her back—bad as the itch, talkative as a magpie, and tricky as a concierge; who abused the pretty women and laughed at the ugly and poor ones, he had a horror of her. Too honest to hide his repulsion entirely, he treated her with the most distant politeness.

At first Mme. de Bassigny was so anxious to attract this distinguished bachelor, who bore such a great name, that she was most

amiable to him. She tried to have the most agreeable and popular salon in Pont-sur-Sarthe, and she knew that the presence of the Duke d'Aubières was indispensable to establish this supremacy. A duke is always a great personage, and especially so in the provinces.

As soon as Colonel d'Aubières arrived it was whispered, "This is probably a duke of the Empire," and he was looked upon with curiosity; but when they learned that old M. de Blamont had ascertained from the library that the title of d'Aubières dated from the revision of 1667, the curiosity became admiration. And as the duke made so fine an appearance, with his beautiful horses, well mounted, and phaeton, and little house for himself—all alone, they said, full of pretty things, in the ninth quarter, near the terminus—he became an object of interest to the mothers, widows, and all the young belles of Pont-sur-Sarthe. Notwithstanding all the amiable attentions of Colonel and Madame Bassigny he remained ceremonious and reserved, contented to be polite and nothing more. More fortunate than her friend, Ma-

dame de Bray had the pleasure of producing the duke in her drawing-room. He was very intimate with her brother-in-law Marc, who brought him to the house, not fearing this time but that his distinguished friend would be well received.

All the young women looked upon Madame de Bray as somewhat *passee*, but still attractive, yet they paid great court to the duke, who looked upon them with indifference. He guessed at once some of Chiffon's troubles, and Uncle Marc told him the rest. So at forty-three he began to love the child of fifteen, who so often ridiculed and laughed at him.

When d'Aubières guessed the secrets of her young heart he thought, "I am indeed a fool!"

Finally after thinking and dreaming of this marriage which at first seemed impossible, after a while he said to himself, "Why not?

The whole evening the poor man was fearful, agonized, looking at Chiffon, trying to discover the impression which his offer had made upon her mind. Chiffon obstinately

turned her eyes away from him. After having said a few words to Madame de Bassigny she talked with a little lank man with a protruding forehead and short chin, the Vicomte de Barfleur, descended from one of the oldest families in the county, and who was one of the exquisites of Pont-sur-Sarthe. From the bored look of the young girl the conversation seemed to be without interest for her. M. d'Aubières was irritated to see her occupied with any one else, and began to take the matter seriously—all at once a tall girl, Geneviève de Lussy, one of her cousins, said: "Oh, Chiffon! Why did you not come sooner to the study?"

"What is that?" Madame de Bray asked. "Did she not go to her class?"

Coryse became very red, and going up to her mother said, "Oh no, I stayed in the garden." She turned a supplicating expression toward M. de Bray, and added, "It was so lovely!"

Up to the age of five Madame de Bray had always addressed her daughter as you,—she said the *tutoiement* among parents and children dated from the Revolution. It was

ignoble and levelled the classes. One fine day on her return from some of her travels she announced that a reciprocal *tutoiement* was more affectionate; this way of talking alone denoted intimacy and confidence. All the women of the Faubourg Saint-Germain now indulged in it with their children, and she now exacted it from Coryse. The little girl found it difficult to use the expression so far from her heart and lips. Madame de Bray also forgot it very often, and when carried away in discussion returned to the "*you.*"

"I have just told you—I remained in the garden."

"Oh, you idled."

"No."

"What then have you done?"

"I looked at the flowers."

"That is just what I have said!" and with an important air, as if she held herself responsible for the proper use of her time and had overlooked her studies—"What was the subject to-day, Geneviève?"

The young girl stopped a moment to recover her thoughts, and then said, "We were busy with reproduction." After an over-

whelming silence she added, "With the reproduction of shrubs."

Uncle Marc shrugged his shoulders and said in a low tone, "Chiffon is right to study flowers in the garden; it does not annoy any one."

The marchioness, who was quite ignorant of these things, with a very learned and protecting air returned to the *tutoiement:*

"Coryse, hast thou understood?"

The little girl did not reply, but Geneviève, addressing her, said, "Tuesday the study is on 'Britannicus.'"

"I will go," Chiffon said. "I love Racine so much!"

Little Barfleur knew that a man of the world should be *au fait* on all subjects, and he asked with a polished indifference why she liked Racine so much?

"I don't know," Chiffon said. "Unless it is that they want me to like Corneille."

Marc de Bray began to laugh; his sister-in-law turned upon him furiously and said, "You are trying to make her more ridiculous and unbearable than ever."

"Me?"

"Yes, you! who laugh at all her absurdities as if you found them so funny."

She continued to scold, when Chiffon, much irritated at this criticism of herself, answered with glistening eyes and nose in the air as in the old days of battle, "I wish you would change the subject of conversation."

One of the doors of the drawing-room opening on the garden was ajar, and without waiting for a reply or to judge of the effect produced by her speech, she went down the steps to meet Gribouille, her best friend, an enormous dog, short and thick, fierce-looking but good-natured.

It was a bright night but no moon—one of those nights full of humidity and perfume that Coryse loved so much. Followed by Gribouille she went away from the house toward the end of the garden. The subtle odor of the white petunias attracted her, and when she came near the bed so pale in the midst of the grasses she leaned toward it, nostrils expanded, and seized with an intense desire to roll on the sweet flowers that she might breathe better.

But she thought: "I will hurt them!"—For Chiffon felt sure that the flowers suffered, and never touched them but with delicacy and extreme care.

A noise on the walk made Gribouille bark; and all at once she guessed that it was M. d'Aubières who was coming in the darkness.

He asked, "Is it you, Miss Coryse?" and with a timid voice added that he would like to talk to her for a while.

"Have they told you that——"

She pitied his embarrassment. "Yes; I know that you have asked me in marriage to-day."

"Well?" he murmured, his voice suffocated.

"Well! I did not receive it as you wish, indeed? That surprises me a little—much, if you will let me tell you?"

"Why? you have not guessed that I have loved you for a long time?"

"Oh, as to that, no!"

"It is true; I have loved you since I knew you."

"Oh, that is too much; I am sure that I did not make such an impression the first day—yes, at dinner. The evening that I sat

next to you; I must have seemed a model! It is true you kept me at the highest pitch with your hunting and your rally papers and all the other thrilling things."

"But," the poor man stammered, "I don't know what you mean."

"Be sure that I am grateful to you for not having spoken of this before."

"How you mock me! You find me ridiculous—tiresome."

She protested with vivacity, "Oh no, not at all; never! I like you so much. I am so happy when I see you."

Joyous, he asked, "Well, but then——?"

"Yes, when I see you *accidentally*,—but if it was forever—forever, all the time——"

"Then you do not wish me?"

At this question Chiffon wanted to say, No. But this would have ended it, and she guessed so much of his suffering in the choking voice so full of supplication, that she had not the heart to add to the grief of one who loved her so much. So she replied gently, "No—I do not say that. I am much flattered, grateful for your affection, but I am such a little girl! I have thought so little upon

grave matters. Give me some time to reflect, will you? Don't ask me to say yes or no; for then I would say no."

"I will await your decision, but let me plead my cause a little." And seeing Coryse turn toward the house he followed her, taking her arm gently in his.

"I beg you to let me have still a few minutes? Your mother told me to join you here."

"Ah!" Chiffon said, "I thought so; she cannot leave me in peace."

In a soft but grave voice M. d'Aubières said, much agitated: "I appear old to you, but I offer you a young heart which has never been given to any one."

"Oh!" Coryse replied, "you have never reached this age without loving some one."

He answered gravely, "What I mean by loving—never!"

"And what do you mean by loving?"

"I mean to give my heart and my life."

"Is this not what is always called loving?"

"No, not always," murmured d'Aubières.

"Now," Chiffon said brusquely, "I would like to tell you that I don't believe it."

"You don't? why?"

"Well, it is a little difficult to explain, but one spring day, when I was riding on horseback with Uncle Marc in the Crisville wood, I saw you in the distance with a lady. I recognized you at once; there is no one in Pont-sur-Sarthe so tall as you are. You were on foot and a hack followed you—one of those funny little hacks from the station. The lady—she was one of those women of whom no one speaks except my mother and Madame Bassigny, who calls them damsels. One passes aside from them in the street or circus; when it is necessary to brush by them it is thought to burn you. Pardon my speaking in this way of one of your friends."

"Me?" the duke protested, half laughing and half sad.

"Then I said to Uncle Marc, 'There is M. d'Aubières with the lady we should not talk about'—and I forgot to tell you, Paul de Lussy, Geneviève's brother, he also made great fun of this woman. Then Georgette Guilbray, the daughter of your general, showed her to Geneviève one day in the park. The lady said to her, 'She is the one your brother laughs about.' Geneviève showed

her to me also, and I asked papa at breakfast to explain it to me. Oh! I will never forget it! I can see my mother now jump up and curse me with her napkin, and call me a shameful girl! I was blue, I did not understand what was the matter. Then after breakfast papa led me into the smoking-room, and he told me not to speak of such things, especially before my mother, and besides one should ignore these women, who are a world apart. In the evening this began again with my mother when I went to bed. Indeed, I was never caught in such a snarl in my life. But perhaps it tries you for me to relate all this?"

"No. I would like only to explain."

"Wait until I finish. Then I said to Uncle Marc, 'Look at M. d'Aubières with the woman that no one talks about;' and he said, 'You don't know what you are talking about. You are as near-sighted as a mole, and you can't see so far away.' Then I offered to run and look, but he did not wish it, and the first path we found—crack! he pushed me in so that I could not see the road any longer; and this is all now——"

"I am going to ex——"

"I have not finished! A month after I was with old John and I saw you with the same woman in nearly the same place. I said to myself, 'This time I will not be like my mother and Madame Bassigny, and I am not afraid of burning myself. I am going to look closely at them;' and began to trot. 'Miss Coryse,' John said, 'this road is good grazing, the horses want to put their muzzles in it. My advice is to go back from where we came.' I did not listen to him, but at this moment you got into the funny hack and went by the Crisville road. I said to John, 'I want to see where they go;' and he said, 'Miss Coryse, that is not the thing for you to do.'"

"And after?"

"Afterward I lost you in a cross-road, but I found you again, at the inn at Crisville. Your horse ate the hay and you were first at the window, with the damsel. Then I thought——"

"You have thought?"

"Yes I thought, as M. d'Aubières hides himself in the wood and inns with a woman

with whom he cannot show himself, it is quite certain that he wishes to see her regardless of everything—that he loves her! He a colonel, and above all an old man."

The duke made a motion to explain.

"Yes; in comparison with Paul de Lussy, who is only twenty-two, you are old, are you not? In Paul these things would be called foolish."

"It is terribly dull at Pont-sur-Sarthe; and one must try and get amusement anywhere. I cannot explain to you what you cannot understand, but I can assure you that whatever you may have seen or heard of my stupid existence I am worthy of your love, and to be your husband. Never—since the day I first saw you I have had no idea of giving my name or heart to any one, and I offer you, nothwithstanding my great age, a love young and pure." Pressing against him the little arm that he had kept under his own, he whispered, "I beg you to let me hope a little?"

"If I do not reply at once yes," Coryse said frankly, "it is that I do not wish to marry a man that I do not love above all others. I detest the world and its manners! I have as

yet loved Uncle and Aunt de Launay, Uncle Marc, old John, my good dog, and my flowers. I want to love my husband tenderly and truly, though I do not yet know what love is."

M. d'Aubières stopped a moment and took the child's hands and pressed them to his lips. "I will be dreadfully unhappy if I must give you up." He drew her toward him and she made no resistance, touched by the trembling voice, and all this tenderness.

"Chiffon," he murmured, "my little Chiffon!"

She leaned against his shoulder, dreaming and asking herself if she could not love this man who appeared so good and who loved her so dearly!

But M. d'Aubières, overcome by this little body which abandoned itself to him, enervated by the darkness, drunk with the perfume of the flowers and at this hour of the night, completely lost his head. He threw his arms around Coryse and smothered her with kisses.

The little girl drew away with horror, and as the duke regained his composure she reproached him for what he had done.

"Pardon me, I love you so dearly!"

Awakening from a fright which in her innocence she could not explain, she replied simply, "I also ask pardon, but I do not wish to be embraced."

CHAPTER IV.

"HAVE you seen Chiffon this morning?" M. de Bray asked the marchioness, who entered the library a little before breakfast, where he and his brother were talking together.

Uncle Marc said that he had met her about nine o'clock in the Benedictines street —she was walking very fast followed by old John. The marchioness was very angry at her going without permission. M. de Bray suggested in a conciliating tone that she had probably gone to mass.

"To mass! she never goes except on Sunday."

Marc was looking out of the window and announced her return with Luce. Luce was the Baroness de Givry, cousin-german of M. de Bray. She came into the library followed by Chiffon, who entered with her nose in the air, assuming the most indifferent manner.

Without addressing the young woman, the marchioness attacked Coryse with harsh voice and threatening tone, which made the little girl half shut her eyes.

"Where have you been?"

The child replied, "To Saint Marcien."

"What? you never go to mass!"

"I have not been to mass."

"Well, what have you been doing?"

"I have been to see the Abbé Châtel!"

"Why?"

"Because I had something to tell him."

"Ah, indeed! what has he told you?"

"Before I tell you what he said to me, I had best tell you what I asked him;" and laughingly she said, "This will be a long story."

Then the marchioness, addressing Madame de Givry, asked her if they had met at the confessional of the Abbé Châtel. When the young woman told her that he was no longer her confessor, the marchioness expressed surprise, telling her she thought she talked of him constantly and could not move a finger without him; and she wanted to know what had happened.

Luce de Givry was a tall woman about twenty-eight, bony and brown, entirely devoid of grace. She was celebrated in Pont-sur-Sarthe for her piety and narrowness—but tolerant of the views of others, she practised good works, but loved the world passionately, who, as Marc de Bray said, paid her with black ingratitude. Not that she was disagreeable and wanting in intelligence, but she failed to please by reason of little ridiculous ways and by an absolute lack of youth and charm. Women were bored by her rigid views, men could not pardon her want of beauty, and Luce was only appreciated in her family, who loved her for her fine qualities and natural goodness.

"Let us hear a little that you have said to the abbé," Uncle Marc asked, playing stupid.

Madame de Givry repeated very gently, "I confess no longer to him."

"You have quarrelled?"

"No, we have had no dispute, but he does not wish it."

"Since when?" Chiffon asked, very much surprised.

"Since my ball which I gave at the time of the circus."

Marc asked what her ball had to do with him? "Is he stupid enough to interfere with such things?"

"Oh!" Luce replied with animation, "it is not the fault of the poor abbé; it is my fault. I went the evening before to ask permission of him to give it."

"What did he say?"

"He said, 'My child, these things do not concern me.'"

"He has fine sense."

"I insisted, but he wanted to end the matter. He said, 'Don't come to me, a priest, to ask permission to give an entertainment which the Church does not approve. I should not encourage you in these things.' 'But my husband wishes me to give the ball.' 'Very well; give it and then come and tell me you have done it, and we will arrange matters afterward.' 'But, Father, I don't wish to give it without your permission.' 'Indeed, my child, you place me in a most awkward position.'"

"He was right, poor man!" Marc de Bray said laughingly.

The marchioness declared him to be a hypocrite. She only believed in the Jesuits.

Coryse was vexed to hear the old abbé called a hypocrite; she loved him so much.

"Well," her mother said, "it is not his place to excite the people of Pont-sur-Sarthe to revolt."

And, turning to Madame de Givry, she said that she could not understand her spending her life in going to balls and without permission.

"But I have got it."

"How?"

"It is just what I said to the Abbé Châtel, 'since you let me go to balls?' He replied, 'My child, I have nothing to do with it; a ball gives more opportunity to sin than many other things. When you give a ball you give the opportunity to others to sin; you are in a certain way responsible for it,—but on the contrary, when you do not go to a ball you not only refrain from sinning yourself, but give no occasion to others.' That makes you laugh?"—to Marc, who had rolled over on the sofa. "All the invitations had gone out, we had only two days. When I returned home

I said to Hubert and mamma that the Abbé Châtel had refused permission."

"Did they put their heads together?" Coryse asked.

"Yes, mamma told me that I was foolish to speak of this to the abbé. Hubert was furious. He said, 'Well, we won't give the ball, but as we are no longer in mourning, I don't see why we should receive politeness from people and not return it.' Then the good Providence had pity on me and inspired me with the thought to go to Father Ragon."

"Ah, indeed!" Coryse said with a grimace.

"Father Ragon was charming. When I told him about the Abbé Châtel and explained to him the object of my visit, he asked me what was said about it in the gospel—'A woman should obey her husband.' 'Your husband wishes you to give a ball; God wishes it.'"

"Oh!" Coryse said, "how many things are put upon the Lord!"

"I was delighted, and ran at once to the Abbé Châtel and told him that I had confessed to Father Ragon and that he had given

me permission. He said, 'Well, my child, you are satisfied with Father Ragon;' but I was not very enthusiastic for fear of wounding him. He told me to go to him in the future, for he had never seen any one in the confessional as stupid as I was."

"Did he say stupid? He learned that from me," Coryse said with a laugh. "The poor abbé is so good and so funny!"

"Don't you know, Luce," said Marc de Bray, "that you should not tell these things."

"Why?" his cousin asked innocently.

"Because you make yourself ridiculous, and the abbé also." Marc thought the fear of harming the old confessor would induce her to stop rather than the fear of hurting herself.

The marchioness said: "The Abbé Châtel comes from the people; he knows nothing, he has no delicacy, no idea of the world, and naturally Coryse chooses him for her confessor."

"The Abbé Châtel is no longer my confessor," her daughter replied.

"And since when, I beg you to tell me?"

"For three or four years—since you took

no longer any interest in me, and I had to go out with John; since my first communion."

"Oh!" her mother replied, feeling ashamed of her ignorance of her child's movements; "you go to his house continually. What is it for, if not to confess?"

"He is my confidential friend. I love him dearly; he is true and safe, and I tell him all my little troubles—those that I should tell you."

Her mother, much vexed, asked to whom she confessed at present?

She replied, "To no one."

And, noticing her mother's expression, she added: "To every one, if you wish to know; sometimes to one and sometimes to another. I go to St. Marcien, to the cathedral, to the new chapel, to Our Lady of the Lilies—indeed I go around to all the parishes, and as there are at least three priests to every parish I have a good margin. I confess about six times a year; that will do for a long time, and when I have finished I begin again."

"This child is mad! absolutely mad!" the marchioness cried out, and with a sad air,

"She goes to the right and to the left, instead of choosing an intelligent director."

"A director indeed! that is just what I don't want. I do what I think right as I understand it. We are told to confess, but not ordered to give up our lives to it. To those also that we meet in society, away from the church—it is horrible to me to mix these relations as salad. I find it grotesque and disgusting."

"This is absurd," the marchioness said. "You might as well not consult a doctor for fear of meeting him in society."

"This is not a parallel case."

"It is exactly the same thing: to one you show your soul, to the other your body, which is worse?"

"Very well; as far as I am concerned I would rather it should be my body than my soul."

"Say no more," her mother commanded with one of her dramatic gestures; "you are a horrible creature, a girl without modesty."

Coryse replied gently: "I understand modesty differently. Oh, it is a funny word! I don't like to use it. What a hateful sound!"

"Hush! I charge you to hush!"

"Charge you!" Coryse looked with a satirical smile upon her uncle's frank face, while the fury of his sister-in-law was turned upon him:

"Yes! you may laugh! That comes well from you who are responsible in part for this tone which Coryse assumes."

Marc de Bray did not reply, as usual in these cases; and the marchioness, made more furious by his silence, went on: "Yes —it is well that you are silent,—as you are the cause of my learning nothing from this child; it is true that her nature is bad, but——"

Madame de Givry rose to go, anticipating a scene, and turning toward Coryse (not daring to address Madame de Bray) said: "I am so distressed; it is all my fault. I spoke of the Abbé Châtel and all this has followed."

"Oh, indeed!" Coryse said, looking at her mother, "this happens always; you did not bring it about."

She wanted to escape and ran behind her cousin, but the marchioness called her with a

voice more shrill than ever to remain in the room; she wanted to speak to her.

Without saying a word Chiffon took her seat.

Her mother then asked what answer should be given to the Duke d'Aubières.

"None. I will answer him myself."

"But I am your mother and have a right to know your decision."

"I have not decided to marry M. d'Aubières and I am sorry, for I like him—so much."

"This is madness! You will never have such an opportunity again."

"Very well; I repeat, it would be wrong in me to say yes against my heart. I have thought well upon it and I have decided——"

"It is the Abbé Châtel who has prompted you to do this?"

"I have explained all this to the abbé and he approves entirely, but suggested nothing; on the contrary he advised me to wait a little longer before deciding."

The marchioness thought a moment and, turning to her daughter, became pathetically tender:

"Corysande! my beloved child! I have

only you in the world; you are my only love and joy. I have lived only for you,—since the day of your birth."

Chiffon was accustomed to her mother's poetical flights, yet always felt a vague surprise in the presence of this formidable woman. She listened, mouth open, eyes glistening, but with head bent, fearing that she might laugh if she encountered the marchioness's amazed expression and Uncle Marc's jocular look.

Her mother added: "You have always been an ungrateful child and I expect nothing from you, but for your own interest I beg you to reflect and not decide so quickly."

Chiffon told her that she had thought deeply on the matter, and all those that she had consulted told her to decide for herself.

The marchioness wrung her hands tragically. "I beg you for the last time to wait before replying, and talk the matter over with intelligent people;" with an indifferent air, "Father Ragon, for example!"

"Indeed!" Coryse said, half laughing and half angry, "you think he will find it a

subtle case—something like the De Luce ball?"

"Do you wish me to get on my knees to you?"

"No, thank you. I don't wish that! I will see Father Ragon when you wish. I don't care! only it was easier for him to stop the affairs of De Luce and of God than those of M. d'Aubières and myself."

"Will you promise me to go and see Father Ragon to-day?"

"Yes, I promise you."

"Will you listen to his advice?"

"I will listen, but don't say that I will follow it."

"What did you say to M. d'Aubières yesterday afternoon?"

"I told him the truth—that I loved him very much, but not enough to marry him; but I would reflect upon it."

"And what did he say?"

"He kissed me, and that was very disagreeable."

"Because it was the first time, and it frightened you?"

"No, indeed; not the least in the world.

It had a very overpowering effect upon me, that was all; and to show that I was not frightened I told him of this effect."

"Oh, you told him?"

"Poor d'Aubières!" Uncle Marc laughingly put in.

At this moment the servant announced breakfast. Soon after, when Coryse was pouring coffee, Madame de Bray went out suddenly from the library.

Coryse, noticing this sudden flight, said: "She is going to take a lesson from Father Ragon! It is useless—I have a horror of him, with his sly expression, and smiles borrowed from old coquettes who try to hide their black teeth."

The marquis, always kind, tried to persuade her against her hasty opinion.

She answered firmly, "I have no respect for him."

Uncle Marc and M. de Bray began to laugh; the manner in which Chiffon talked of a man so intelligent and powerful, who led all the women and most of the men in Pont-sur-Sarthe, seemed to them like a play.

The little girl blushed. "You are laugh-

ing at me, because I used the word respect; it is a little pompous, but I know of no word which expresses better what I think."

M. de Bray protested. "Oh no, my little Chiffon, we were not laughing at you. Come, tell us all the Abbé Châtel said to you."

"It was I, rather, who told him something."

"What was it?—the proposal from M. d'Aubières?"

"Oh no; it was about the kissing; the affair of yesterday afternoon."

"Indeed! so you call that an affair?"

"Indeed it was of importance to me! for the moment he began with these things I leaned toward 'yes;' a little later and it would have been that. But it all fell to the ground."

"Why?"

"Because it was disagreeable to me, I tell you, and as I thought a woman was obliged to let her husband kiss her when he wanted I could not decide with this before me. No, I could not."

"Did you tell the abbé this?" Uncle Marc asked, who was greatly amused.

"Indeed I did!"

"How did you tell him?"

"I said, 'M. Abbé, M. d'Aubières has proposed to me, and all at home wish me to say yes."

"Permit me, my dear," her father said—"I never wished it."

"He understood that. When I said they, he knew who I meant. Then I asked his advice, and he replied: 'My child, as your relatives wish this marriage, it remains for you to consult your heart and head; they will tell you better than I can.' I told him that my head said yes entirely, and my heart almost. Then I told him that M. d'Aubières had kissed me in the garden, and I wanted to explain to him the effect it had upon me. Then he cut me short with 'Enough, my child, it is not necessary for me to know more.' Why are you laughing, Uncle Marc?"

"Because you are so funny with your narrations to the old abbé, who does not understand these matters."

"On the contrary this is his business, and I wanted to explain to him the funny effect all this had upon me. Yes, I told him that I

never felt anything like this on New Year's day, when I had to kiss so many horrible people."

"Why did you tell the abbé that you kissed so many disagreeable people on New Year's day?"

"Because it's true; first Madame de Clairville, who always kisses me with her wet veil, and Cousin Balue. Do you think him interesting? He had not a wet veil, but threw spray all over you, which was the same thing. I do believe I like M. d'Aubières best of all."

"Are you serious?"

"Serious? If you think I am joking you are deceived. What is the time?"

"Two o'clock."

"What! already! I must go and see Father Ragon!"

"You will have plenty of time; his confessional does not begin until four o'clock."

"I am not going to the confessional; I am going to see him in the parlor. Otherwise I would have to wait too long. Four o'clock is the hour for the frogs to come for holy water. Oh, shut up!"

With a long slide she left the room, and her clear voice was heard calling John.

Uncle Marc, becoming serious, said: "Whether Chiffon marries d'Aubières or not, when she is here no longer we will miss her dreadfully."

CHAPTER V.

When Chiffon arrived at the house of the Jesuits it was nearly three o'clock. A storm was coming up, which darkened the heavens and made the air stifling. She told John to stay in the garden if he wished, it might be more amusing to him; but he looked around the parlor with a suspicious expression. He replied to her in a hesitating tone, "If it pleases you best."

"Oh no, come in if you wish, but don't walk in that funny way; one might think you were afraid of falling into a dungeon."

"I am not afraid, Miss Coryse, but I am a little uncomfortable here; it seems as if the walls had ears, and it makes the cold chills creep over me. This is worse than that cursed Court of Justice."

"That's right, old John. Curse a little, that is a good thing in this house."

Pushing the old servant out, she glided over the shining floor and on the little pieces

of carpet scattered about, telling him to go, that he might do some mischief. As soon as he had gone she made haste to the parlor, which she saw for the first time. This fine new dwelling which the Jesuits had built at Pont-sur-Sarthe was new to her. She had only been to the chapel, brought very unwillingly by her mother for some elegant reception. Madame de Bray thought the Jesuits were not only good men to know but also to be seen with. All smart society went to their receptions, where the best male and female voices could be heard and music of the best kind. Many marriages had been concocted there, and many flirtations also. At first Coryse was unhappy at being dragged to these reunions; they bored her and she thought them irreverent, but finally became interested in these intrigues. She knew all the little religious and worldly rivalries. She knew that one father was more in demand than another for confessions, and that others were vexed at his success; and also that the most lovely penitents could obtain an *entree* at all hours to the confessional, open to others only at stated times.

While waiting for Father Ragon, the most popular of the worldly fathers, who made many wait for him, Chiffon could not help comparing this fine house, constructed with an eye to English comfort concealed under an appearance of severity, with the dirty and gloomy house occupied by the curate of the cathedral with his three vicars. She said to herself, if the smart set of Pont-sur-Sarthe know the way to the one, the poor know the road to the other. It seemed to her that the big sums brought here by legacies, gifts, and alms never left it, while the poor and meagre sums obtained with so much difficulty were scattered by the little gray house below. Chiffon hated the hoarders; the little word economy which she heard around her pronounced with so much respect appeared hateful and repugnant to her, and she thought much might be spared from this new and elegant home and given to the poor. In taking a rapid glance of the parlor she saw the peeping-holes opened in the white walls, and they reminded her of shutters in a bank, and the Jesuits who were walking rapidly from time to time through the room seemed like

employees rather than priests. In this convent all spoke of the world, nothing of God.

Soon Coryse became impatient. "I can't wait here forever. It is nearly four o'clock; I am going to my studies." She went to the window and saw John asleep on a bench. He had seated himself correctly at first as on his box, but gradually slipped down, his legs stretched. The fathers who were passing by could not quite understand the old man asleep and apparently drunk. Their mute indignation amused the little girl, and she got over her fatigue—when a voice a little dry yet sweet said:

"It is you, my child? but I can't receive you just now."

"Oh!" Chiffon said, "I thought my mother had asked you to let me come." She went toward the door and with a relieved yet amiable expression said, "If you cannot, I must go."

Father Ragon stopped her with a gesture, saying, "I can't receive you here."

"I beg pardon, it was my mother who wished."

"Yes, your mother knows that I receive

sometimes in the parlor; but that I can scarcely do for her I cannot for you."

As the little girl did not answer him he went on in the same clear voice:

"Your mother has told me, my child, that you wish to consult me on a very grave question."

"Oh! I wish! that is, it is she who wishes——"

"Very well, I will hear you in a moment, in my confessional."

But Chiffon protested, "I didn't come to confess."

"Very well, my penitents are waiting for me. I am late already."

Coryse, a little frightened, saw the wait prolonged in the chapel, dreadfully new, where gold glistened and the startling green of the painted foliage made one feel like gnashing one's teeth. The eye could not rest on anything sweet or tranquil, where one could collect themselves in prayer in the midst of all this whispering and noise. The fear of this delay suggested a thought which might deliver her.

"I will go to the chapel and wait there.

It won't bore me to wait, here; those women talk so loud!"

We must believe that Father Ragon was not anxious to deliver to the mocking ears of Chiffon the confidences of those she had so irreverently called the frogs at holy water. Suddenly he changed his mind, saying, as if he had not understood: "Come, as you are so anxious I will hear you here;" changing his voice to a quiet tone as a deaf person, he said, "I will hear you, my child. What have you to tell me?"

She answered deliberately, "I?—nothing at all."

"I thought you had something to say to me."

More accustomed to defence than attack, Father Ragon hesitated at first, then said: "Your mother has told me that the Duke d'Aubières has proposed to you, and that you treat his offer, I will not say with repugnance——"

"Oh yes, you can say it; go on."

The Jesuit had never spoken to Chiffon when with her mother except some little word of welcome, to which she would reply

or not as she felt inclined. There was silence.

"Well?" Coryse questioned simply.

"Well," Father Ragon said, "this proposal would be flattering to any young girl, and to you not only flattering but unexpected. You have no fortune——"

"I know that!"

"The Duke d'Aubières, without being very rich, finds that he has enough for two. In asking your hand he gives a fine example of disinterestedness."

"I know that also! and I am most grateful to M. d'Aubières, who I admire so much."

"What, you like him?"

"With all my heart; better than any one who comes to the house."

"Then I don't understand why you——"

"You don't understand? I think it is very plain! I like M. d'Aubières as I like Madame de Jarville, for example, or the Abbé Châtel. I love them, but to marry them—deliver me!"

"My child, I see that you are ignorant of what marriage is."

"Of course I am, but still I may have some

ideas about it. Should I marry, I want to love him who will be my husband differently from the way I love the Duke d'Aubières and the Abbe Châtel."

"You are a little sentimental, as all young girls."

"I sentimental? Only for flowers, and the heavens, and rivers, and I love to throw myself on the earth. Yes! I am sentimental about those things! And even for animals, if you wish; but for men? Oh no, never!"

Positively stupefied by this style of talking, Father Ragon asked with a satirical expression at the corners of his lips: "Who brought you up, my dear child?"

Without appearing to see the irony she answered: "At present by papa and Uncle Marc, and before by my uncle and my Aunt de Launay."

As the Jesuit collected his thoughts, he repeated, "*De Launay?*"

Chiffon laughingly said, "Oh, don't try to find them! They don't come to you! they are not that kind! They are good old people, not fashionable, not in the swim. They go to their parish! But pardon me; when I in-

terrupted you, you said that I was sentimental; that is why I was so brusque."

"I told you that young girls are all more or less taken with some ideal that they concoct themselves and never meet."

"I am not taken with any ideal."

"That is a good thing! for you are in full possession of your heart and can consider calmly the fine future which opens before you if you marry the Duke d'Aubières."

"Do you call that a fine future, to marry an officer? I have always detested them. That is, the officers only; I am sorry for the soldiers—it is not their fault, and I love them for that! I never meet one overcome by the heat that I have not the wish to ask him to come into the house and refresh himself."

Father Ragon gazed at Chiffon bewildered, and he thought that Madame de Bray was right when she said that her daughter was not like everybody. He said to her, assuming a cold and formal manner:

"In truth, my child, you speak a strange language."

Coryse excused herself with tact: "Yes—I know that! but I can't help my instincts.

I beg pardon for shocking you. These things shock the Abbé Châtel also, who has more reason for it than you have;" and looking at him she added, "This is the whole thing. You are a man of the world, and I am not!"

"Now," the Jesuit said, who could with difficulty restrain his laughter, "do you feel now, my child, as if you could reflect before refusing this marriage?—and listen to my advice?"

"Reflection would serve me nothing! When I reflect I go to sleep! and the more I think the more I say No. There is no advantage in thinking about it, and as to following your advice, will you let me talk frankly to you?"

"Yes, you may."

"Very well; I see no reason why I should follow your advice,—you don't know me; you have seen little of me, and moreover you are so shocked at my ideas that you are ready to scream!" Seeing that the Jesuit made a movement of protestation, "Yes, I am right; you have no reason to be interested in me. All you say is because my mother has asked you to say it—foolishly."

"I say these things because it is my advice."

"Oh, it is your advice, because my mother has told you that I have no future and could only make a bad marriage, and this would be superb! Now under this pretext you advise me to marry a man that I cannot love and with whom I could never pass my life."

"My child, you are wrong; it is because the Duke d'Aubières is a man of birth and honor, good also. I would advise you in the same way if you were rich."

"Oh, don't tell me this! If I was rich, instead of urging this marriage with d'Aubières you would be keeping me for——"

As she was then silent Father Ragon asked for whom?

"For one of your old scholars who had lost everything, or who had been gambling, or any of those kind of men. I see what is going on at Pont-sur-Sarthe, and I rejoice in not having money. You know how to take care of your own!—you are not lazy!"

Chiffon, thinking she had spoken too plainly, raised her eyes kindly to the Jesuit.

Her beautiful and distinguished face was on the contrary softened.

"Very well," he said, looking at the little girl with a benevolent expression. "It seems to me, from what I can guess, that those who are not lazy ought to please you. You ought to love those who try to raise others."

"Yes, I do—if it is an individual, not a corporation."

Father Ragon, astonished, looked at Chiffon and said nothing. Since he came to Pont-sur-Sarthe this little urchin of sixteen was the first thinking being he had met. Seeing that the child took his silence for dismissal, and was going, he asked her if she had read much.

"No, not much."

"Then you have thought a great deal upon serious subjects."

"Oh yes; when on horseback I think of many things. I can't go to sleep, so I think, but it is involuntary."

"The result of these reflections is that you dislike our order?"

"Oh, you don't strike me as an order—I mean a religious one. The Dominicans, the

Capucines, the Oratorians, these I call orders. They occupy themselves with thoughts of God, they preach. You are like a political association, and also interest yourselves in marriages. You frighten me!—and the Lord knows very few can do that."

"I can assure you, my child, that we work for the good and salvation of humanity."

"Their good on the earth, I know; their future salvation I don't think interests you much. Then humanity for you means men and women of the world. This is just like my mother. I know all about it."

"I see that you are determined to take part against us, and you are wrong."

"Oh!" Chiffon said politely, "not more against you than the Freemasons, or the Polytecnicians, who carry their monomania through life. I hate men who mass themselves to ruin the few."

"This hatred can lead one very far."

"When I used to go shopping with my nurse, and I would hear the poor little shopkeepers complaining that they were ruined by the big stores in the Rue de Benedictines and the Place Carnot,—when I would

see them one by one closed, I was furious about these big houses swallowing up the little ones, and I would at night pray to God that He would destroy them all in the night."

"This was a wicked thought."

"Perhaps, but I could not help it. I didn't tell this to Uncle Albert and Aunt Matilda; they would not have understood it, and I never spoke to them of these thoughts or to other people."

"I hope not now either."

"Oh yes, now I tell them to Uncle Marc, and also to the Abbé Châtel."

"I see," the Jesuit said with a smile; "the Viscount de Bray is a Socialist—or at least he was presented as such at the last elections?"

"No!" Chiffon answered brusquely, who could not bear any reflection upon her Uncle Marc; "you are mistaken! M. de Bray, who is really what you call a Socialist, did not depend on that for his election. He presented himself without any formality."

"And he lost it."

"It was the candidate protected by the priests who won," Chiffon said with anger,—

"yes, it takes too much money to be elected." Then rising to go, without waiting for an invitation from the Jesuit, who forgot himself in listening to this funny little product of modern times, so different from any one he had ever met—she added a little satirically: "I don't dare to keep you longer! You are so busy. All these ladies will soon be tramping to the chapel."

Father Ragon rose also, and Coryse drew back that he might precede her.

"Oh no!" he said smilingly, "you are not a little girl now. You will soon be Madame la Duchesse."

"You surprise me," Chiffon replied, tucking up her hair which had fallen to her waist, "I have not the style for this position."

Father Ragon asked who was her escort; he saw no one with her.

"Oh no!" she answered; "I have not been educated in American fashion. I have my nurse," showing him old John, who was asleep on the bench and had slipped down on the ground. "He is not very ornamental, is he?"

When Chiffon had gone out of the gate she

returned and, looking at the big chapel clock, said laughingly:

"Half-past five! I have kept those frogs from the holy water!"

CHAPTER VI.

THEY were at dinner when Madame de Bray entered the dining-room, and for a long time had given up waiting for her. She rarely came in time, giving as excuse the races or visits, or a stopped clock, and sometimes a carriage accident. As soon as she was seated, she asked Coryse, in a wonderfully amiable manner, if she was pleased with her interview with Father Ragon.

"Oh yes," Coryse answered, in her usually indifferent way, "I was much charmed;" but after thinking for a moment she added, "I doubt if he was equally pleased with me."

"What did you say to him?" her father asked, somewhat worried.

"Oh, a lot of things; conversation varied."

"I will see him to-morrow," her mother interposed, "and he will tell me all that passed."

Chiffon said quietly: "I can tell you every-

thing. Nothing occurred of any great importance. Why are you surprised?"

"Because you seem embarrassed."

"Why should I be embarrassed?"

"I know nothing about it."

"Nor do I. You wanted me to go and see Father Ragon, and I went; that is all!"

"Did nothing disagreeable happen?"

"No; he is well-bred,—too much so perhaps. I also not too much, but enough. I suppose he has not approved of what I said to him, and I am sure that nothing he has said convinced me; but apart from this we are as before."

Madame de Bray, taking advantage of the departure of a servant, asked if she had decided to marry the Duke d'Aubières?

"I have decided not to marry him;" and turning toward her Uncle Marc she said: "I will give him my answer to-night; you said he was coming."

"No!" her mother interposed excitedly, "you shall not end the matter this evening! It would be madness to do so without proper reflection."

"I have reflected! I have done nothing

but this. I have thought so much about it since yesterday that I am almost dead."

"You will wait before giving the duke your final answer."

"Wait? He shall not dance attendance upon me any longer. There has been already too much of this."

"I forbid you to speak to him to-day," and with her usual imperious manner her mother left the room.

Seeing that Chiffon went upstairs instead of going into the parlor, she asked where she was going.

"In my room."

"You will remain here."

The little girl blushed and said plainly: "I don't care! but if I stay I will speak to M. d'Aubières as I ought. I will tell him truthfully that I will never marry him—never!"

"Why, you are crazy!"

"You told me that long ago!"

"There! the bell is ringing!"

"So much the better," Chiffon sighed; "I am anxious to be relieved of this burden!"

As the colonel entered the room she ran toward him without embarrassment, and

said, "M. d'Aubières, I want to speak to you a moment in the garden;" and as they descended the steps she said smilingly, "But without any kisses."

He followed her quietly, but felt, notwithstanding his love, what would be her answer. Before she spoke he asked timidly:

"Is it not to tell me that you will not marry me?"

"Yes," Chiffon murmured, much pained at causing so much grief—"I have thought much since yesterday, and I see that it is impossible. I love you with all my heart, and I am in despair at my obligation to tell you this; but it is better before than after."

He did not answer. She could not see his face clearly, but guessed his great sorrow. Putting her hand on his arm she begged him not to suffer; that she was not worth it. She said she was high-tempered, ignorant, badly reared—all these vices her mother said came from the Avesnes family; "and then I could never be the wife of a colonel, nor worldly in any way. I can't talk, or receive, or be polite to people who are disagreeable to me; nor persuade idiots that I think them clever.

I have very little of the woman in me; I am a savage, made to live only with flowers and animals." All at once changing her tone, she said: "*À propos* of animals, where is Gribouille? I have not seen him since breakfast."

She then ran across the grass toward the stables. In a moment she returned, running and followed by Gribouille, who was jumping on her shoulders. Turning to the duke she begged pardon for having left him so suddenly and in the midst of such a serious conversation; but she was so afraid her dear Gribouille was lost.

"This, you see, is my bad manners."

As the duke was silent she looked out into the obscurity and asked if he was not there.

"Yes," he stammered with a choking voice, "I am always there."

He was seated on a bit of turf, and coming nearer Chiffon knew that he was crying.

"What! are you crying?" The thought that this big giant, and so old, could cry never entered her mind. Stupefied and bewildered, she took her seat near him. "Oh God!" she cried; she lost her head and could

think of nothing else to say. She thought herself a horrible creature to torment in this way so good a man.

The idea that one could suffer in this way for her was shocking. She preferred greatly to be in his place. She thought to herself, "Well, I will tell him all my thoughts, and after that, if he wishes it, I will marry him."

"Listen to me," she said in a clear voice, which moved him deeply; "I will do my best, but it is difficult to say all I wish. If we were in the light I never could; if I could see your face and you mine I would not dare to speak; but don't cry, it is dreadful!" And as he seemed so sad she knelt before him and begged him to bear it better. Passing her arms around his neck, she kissed affectionately the moist cheeks and in a supplicating voice said that she would do all he wished. Forgetting the day before, she leaned toward him, but he repelled her gently:

"No, no! go away from me!"

Surprised at first, Chiffon rose, saying sadly, "Oh yes! I see you are doing as I did yesterday," and she sat down timidly near him.

He answered with confusion: "Don't think that, my dear little Coryse. You cannot understand my feelings. I am nervous, unhappy; I don't know what I do or say. I had a beautiful dream and have fallen from a great height."

She said with agitation: "If you have had what you call a beautiful dream it is not my fault, is it? I did not let you suppose that I was going to marry you? I did not lead you to love me except as a little joke, did I?"

"No, certainly not."

"I am so happy! for otherwise I would be in despair! I think making eyes at men and trying to flirt with them is a shocking thing!" After a little silence she said: "This is going on all around us, but I never do it."

"A moment ago you said that you would explain why you cannot be my wife," the colonel said.

"Yes, but I am timid in explaining it. I guess only about life, and my thoughts are not of much value, but I listen to conversations, whispers, and certain names are mentioned, and when balls are given at the house I see much flirting going on—many things

that are not modest. I don't speak of young girls,—they can do what they wish, can they not, as they are not married? No, I speak of married women; there are many who deceive their husbands. I don't know how it begins or ends, but I think it very bad."

"Yes, very bad!"

"Very well, I am sure that if I married you I would deceive you."

"But," d'Aubières said hesitatingly, "why are you sure of this?"

"I am as sure as one can be of anything. I have never met a man that I could say I would care to marry. If after we were married I should see some one pass that I liked, and should say 'That man I could love!'—think what a blow to you. Why, it would be disastrous!"

Notwithstanding his great sorrow the duke wanted to laugh, but answered gravely: "What you say has happened to many women; what then? Why, instead of letting their thoughts go out to the new-comer they simply lean upon their husband if he is good, as I will be."

Chiffon answered: "I am sure of that, but

do you think that sufficient if the wife is not good?"

"Why? would you not be an honest and brave little wife?"

"I would be that if I did not meet—what? The man I may never meet, but who is certainly not yourself."

As M. d'Aubières betrayed an expression of pain, she said, enthusiastically: "Yes! I love you much and have told you so, but not as a husband, and I am sure the day I meet him I would abandon myself. What am I saying? This is indeed an admission, but I would be culpable to marry you without telling you this. If after knowing what prevents me from saying yes, you still wish it, you have been warned at least and can never reproach me. When I say this it is only my way of talking, because I feel sure that this would give you no happiness. But at the same time I have been candid and never deceived you."

"I understand: you would be wretchedly unhappy with me and I would be miserable to see you so. I must renounce what has been in my thoughts for six months, my only

joy and hope. You have told me most delicately that I am an old fool."

"Do you still wish it?" Coryse asked; "I am sure you do."

"No; I swear not," murmured the poor man, who was choked with emotion. He wished to rise but seemed buried in the ground. "Wait!" feeling that with each effort he sank deeper.

Gribouille understood that all this meant that they were going away, so he began to dance and bark furiously. The duke tried to lean on his hand, but it sank into the soft earth.

"I don't know where I am," he said to Chiffon, who was waiting for him in the walk. "I feel that I am seated in a hole, and the more I want to get out the deeper I fall."

She extended her hand to him, but she also felt the earth sinking beneath her.

"Do you know what this is? It is my flower cemetery. You were seated on it, and as I buried them this morning the earth is very soft. Don't speak of this at the house—they would laugh at me. I know that it is foolish; but I love flowers so dearly!

I can't bear to see them soiled when they are dead."

Since Chiffon was quite a little child she had always buried her faded flowers. She could not bear to see them dragging along the streets. The idea of flowers touching dirty things or swept in the dust was unbearable to her. In winter she burned them in her room, but in summer she buried them in the garden secretly, fearing a scolding from her mother and teasing from Uncle Marc.

"Don't tell this, I beg of you; no one knows it now but Gribouille and yourself, and I would be so angry if they laughed at me, although I know it is foolish."

"You may be sure, Miss Coryse, that I will never speak of the flower cemetery;" and he added sadly, "this poor little cemetery! I, who could never have resembled a flower, came very near being buried in it this evening. Indeed, my heart is buried.'

"Come, you will soon forget all this!"

"Oh no, but will you let me out at the little gate? I don't want to go in the house with my swollen eyes, I would look ridiculous. Besides, I will come to see Marc another day."

"Do you love Uncle Marc?"

"Much! he is one of my earliest chums."

"Are you the same age?"

"No, he is three years younger."

"Oh, that is the same thing."

"Yes, you are right." But in kissing for the last time the little hand so firm and supple, he said aside, "No! it is not the same thing; he is three years younger!"

Returning to the drawing-room, the little girl acted as if she had seen Uncle Marc for the first time reading under the lamp, and instead of answering her mother and father about the disappearance of the duke, she thought: "Three years! Uncle Marc looks ten years younger!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE next morning Chiffon, hidden in the grass playing with Gribouille, while waiting for the hour of her studies, was surprised to see Uncle Marc approach her, who said in a somewhat vexed tone: "Aubières has gone!"

She jumped up with a bound: "What!—gone! Where?"

"To Paris, poor fellow! he needs a change."

"You frightened me. I thought he had gone forever!"

"Would that give you pain?"

"Indeed it would!"

"The grief of Aubières has distressed me, but as it is now all over I will tell you, my little Chiffon, I think you have acted properly."

"Oh, I am so glad you think so; and papa?"

"Yes, papa also."

"Then all is for the best. Are you going to ride on horseback to-day?"

"No, I have letters to write, and I have great news for you. My aunt, Madame de Crisville, is dead!"

"Oh, she is not my aunt. I didn't know her—nor did you very well, as she lived in the South."

"I have seen her only rarely, but I am her godson," and Uncle Marc went on quietly to say that she had left him all her property.

"All her fortune? Why, she was called the Aunt of Carabas; it was she who is so very rich—poor woman!"

Chiffon threw herself on the neck of Uncle Marc, while Gribouille, imitating the movement, jumped on his legs.

"Oh, I am so happy!—so happy that you will have so much money!"

"Stop, you will strangle me!" Uncle Marc cried, trying to get away. "I have told you so often that you are now too old to hang on one like a baby. It is not right."

"I beg pardon; I am always forgetting. Do tell me, what are you going to do with all this money?"

"To begin, I am going to travel."

"Oh, are you going too?" and leaning her head on Uncle Marc's shoulder she began to cry.

"You are foolish, my child."

"No, I am unnerved—I don't know what I am doing. It was first M. d'Aubières who loved me and is gone; now it is you." Her tears came fast, and she said, "All those who love me, they do not cry."

"Come, my Chiffon, I am not going away forever; I am not going around the world. Be quiet; France is good enough for me. Besides, I have the spleen."

"Why do you say spleen instead of home-sickness? You need not be ashamed to say this. I hate those English words!"

"That is better, Chiffon; scold me as much as you like, but laugh—that is what I love."

"Now you can go into politics. The money has come in time; it is only a month before the elections. You have time to bring down the disciples of the good fathers who lie to the workmen—who lie to the men of the world, and who lie all the time. Yes! you will floor them, and I will be glad."

Her Uncle Marc laughed, and asked if her interest was for him or from hatred to his opponents?

"It is for both and for charity. You will do much in this way, for you gave so much before you were rich."

"How do you know?"

"I know your poor, and when I go to see them they talk of you all the time. That is why I go."

"Why do they not talk of you to me also?"

"Because I forbid it, and tell them that we live in the same house, and if we should meet here he would never come again; that he hides his good deeds from others as a robber his thefts."

"What a funny little girl you are! if your mother——"

"Yes; does she know?"

"What?"

"Your inheritance?"

"Yes."

Chiffon began to laugh. "I suppose she made an awful face—while she thought some of the money would be left to charity; yet she hoped that papa and yourself would get

the rest. She must be in a great state of mind." Then turning to him sadly, she asked if he was going at once.

"In a few days only, on business, but I will soon come back."

"Oh, yes; you will then be in time for the elections. I will electioneer for you. Poor John, he will have to trot on foot and on horseback!"

When the viscount began to laugh she asked him if he ridiculed the idea of her electioneering? but, she added, "I am very popular, without appearing to be so, and there are many who dislike you."

"Where?"

"I speak only of Pont-sur-Sarthe, not at Paris. I don't know about that, but I see everything that goes on here. Except a few friends, the others detest you."

"But I have done nothing to provoke this."

"Yes! you have lived alone. That is an unforgivable sin in Pont-sur-Sarthe."

"But I do not live alone."

"Oh, you forswear the dinners, balls, matinées, the receptions of the fathers, garden parties, Thursdays of Madame de Bassigny,

because they bore you. I am glad you do, for it is only in this way that these idiots can make themselves popular."

"Yes—I know that I am a bear, and it is wrong."

"Why wrong? What have you done? what is that to you? Now they will adore you, and will ask you in marriage. It is not a secret?"

"What?"

"Your inheritance."

"No, I will not proclaim it on the housetops, but I am not sorry that they know it."

"Why?" Chiffon said, "you who are so indifferent to the opinion of the world—why do you wish them to know that you are rich?"

"Because when I spend money for my election I don't wish them to think that I am sustained by a committee; this way of doing politics is opposed to my idea. I think it is not clean."

"I don't know what committee could sustain you, because you have independent ideas and have not attached yourself to any party."

"That is true, but they accuse me of it."

"That makes no difference," and the beau-

tiful eyes of the young girl shone with a peculiar light. She declared that she intended to amuse herself, and asked what o'clock it was.

Uncle Marc looked at his watch and told her that it was a quarter to nine.

"Then I will have time if I hurry," and with all her strength she called John.

The old coachman appeared at the stable door, where it was his habit to remain until his little mistress should want him.

"Dress quickly! we will go out at once. Hurry! In ten minutes I must be at the Place des Girondins."

At this moment a servant crossed the courtyard, and Coryse asked if her mother had gone out. The servant said she had not, and the little girl thought, "All is well; I feared that I might meet her," and throwing a kiss to Uncle Marc she ran off laughing.

A quarter of an hour later Chiffon rang at the gate of the Jesuits.

"Is it not at this hour that Father Ragon says mass?" she asked of the brother who opened the door.

"Yes, but it is over; it is nine o'clock."

Instead of going into the chapel Coryse remained in the garden. She walked about in her little blouse of pale pink batiste, her bright face buried in a big leghorn hat covered with roses. Looking at the door of the little church she thought, "He will go out first to the sacristy, but as there is no other way of coming out he will pass by me, and I can't miss him. While waiting all these women will go by, and I will tell them the news. That will be so very amusing!"

Forgetting completely where she was, she began to dance, to the amazement of the brother doorkeeper, who looked out from his lodge.

Although old John was quite accustomed to Chiffon's little ways, yet he was surprised at all this gayety, and said: "Why, what is the matter with you, Miss Coryse?"

She stopped, one foot in the air, and said laughingly, "I will tell you on our way home. While waiting for me go and sleep on your bench if you wish, but do take a more graceful pose than last time."

The door of the chapel made such a deaf-

ening sound that Coryse turned her head around and saw little Barfleur coming from mass. He wore a blue waistcoat very short and tight, and trousers with big plaids of many colors. An enormous cravat enveloped his neck and rose above the collar of his shirt. In this costume he appeared more puny and stunted than ever; not ugly, however, and distinguished enough in spite of his small stature and clothes too much in the height of fashion.

The little girl walked in front of him and simply greeted him. As she was alone he was sufficiently well-bred not to stop her, and simply bowed and seemed waiting to see the people coming from mass.

"He is watching for Madame Delorme," Chiffon thought, who for a long time had guessed that this pretty wife of a notary in Pont-sur-Sarthe was pleased with him.

Finally Madame Delorme appeared, and the young man bowed with a surprised look as if he had not expected to meet her. Chiffon thought, "The mass is not over and they want to have a little talk before the others come out."

Observing the pretty woman bend over to see the little fellow, who just reached her shoulder, she thought, "How funny all this is! M. Delorme is a hundred times better. What can she see in this little Barfleur, who has no mind nor goodness nor refinement? He is foolish, only an apology for a man. There they go for a little chat as if by chance."

She looked after this young woman, admiring her beautiful waist so well balanced on her hips, and thought, "It is nice to be pretty! I wish I was!" Madame de Bray had so often told Coryse that she was ugly and ungraceful that she really believed it.

The sound of voices interrupted her thoughts. Madame de Bassigny came out of the chapel, followed by three women from Pont-sur-Sarthe who were seen often with her.

"Oh!" Coryse thought, "this is a good time to open my budget." She walked slowly toward the group, her head bent as if in contemplation of the little stones rolling about at her feet.

"Oh, this is Miss Chiffon!" cried Madame

de Bassigny. Chiffon saw that she was quite an object of curiosity to others as well as Madame de Bassigny. The story of her refusal of M. d'Aubières and of his departure from Pont-sur-Sarthe, and the surprise of these women that this little girl without a cent should refuse a duke with twenty-five thousand pounds a year, had run through the town. They were jealous of the little girl, and yet felt that she had no right to refuse such an offer.

"How about giving them the news of the inheritance of Uncle Marc?" she thought, while the wife of the colonel looked at her askance. "It is not easy, and this sort of thing should come about naturally."

"I am delighted to see you, Miss Coryse," Madame de Bassigny said amiably; "I was about writing to ask your mother and yourself and M. de Bray to dine with us on Thursday, the fifteenth; also M. Marc if he will come; but I am afraid that he will not do us the honor."

Chiffon saw that her moment had come, and looking attentively at Madame de Bassigny to note the slightest change of expres-

sion, she answered in a clear voice: "My uncle dines out rarely, but in this case he must decline for Thursday, as he leaves town."

"Ah! with his friend M. d'Aubières?"

Chiffon appeared not to understand her, and replied: "No, he goes alone. His aunt, Madame de Crisville, is dead."

"Oh, she died at Pau, did she not?" and turning to some of the women with her, she told them if they wanted a château, Crisville could be bought very soon. It was perched too high for a hospital or orphan asylum. Every one at Pont-sur-Sarthe thought that Madame de Crisville would leave her money to some charity.

Chiffon told her, with such an innocent expression, that her uncle would not sell Crisville, but live there himself. And she added with the same indifference: "He inherits everything."

"What, he? M. de Bray? Why, your aunt has left five or six millions."

"She was not my aunt, and she has left more than this."

Silenced by the aplomb of this young girl,

who was ignorant of the sum of the bequest of the Marquise de Carabas—"More than that?" Madame de Bassigny repeated, stunned and vexed.

They left the chapel; she bade Coryse good-by, and went rapidly before the others to retail the news. In the distance Chiffon saw with joy their faces darken as she told them.

"They are stunned," she thought; "I am so glad I came."

Suddenly she ran toward the chapel, as she saw Father Ragon approaching with his measured steps. "I won't let him hear it from them," and she asked politely if she could speak to him.

As the Jesuit threw a rapid glance toward others waiting for him, she said: "I won't keep you long; I was too chatty yesterday."

"No, my child, I was on the contrary much interested."

"You are very good, but I know I was wrong to speak of my uncle and of his politics; and don't speak of it to my mother—she is coming to see you to-day."

"You exaggerate the importance of this

conversation," Father Ragon told her with a somewhat impatient tone.

"No; I gave you to understand that my uncle would not oppose M. de Bernay this time, because he had no money."

"Yes?"

"Well, it is this: he will do so now, because he has it."

The Jesuit appeared annoyed, and forgetting his usual prudence asked squarely how he got it.

Chiffon answered with her usual indifferent manner, "Because he is the only legatee of his Aunt de Crisville, who died yesterday."

Father Ragon was stupefied, and with his mouth open seemed dazed. Before the ill health of Madame de Crisville had obliged her to go to Pau, she had been one of his penitents, and he knew that he had dictated to her that the Jesuits should not be forgotten in her will. This old lady had died neglecting his wishes and her promises obtained with some trouble, and had left her fortune to a Socialist, who was in good circumstances—a dangerous man whom she unconsciously armed for the struggle against

all that he had respected and sustained. He asked, talking to himself rather than to Chiffon, who devoured him with her bright eyes: "It is an enormous fortune?"

Chiffon repeated, "Enormous! half of a province—yes, at least."

By a rapid intuition the Jesuit had an idea that probably Coryse was laughing at him, but in lowering his eyes he saw her at his feet as smiling and indifferent as ever, and he was reassured. The thought came to him suddenly that Chiffon, whom heretofore he had not thought worthy of much attention, would become an heiress. The affection of the Viscount de Bray for the step-daughter of his brother was well known in Pont-sur-Sarthe. They knew that he loved the little Avesnes not only as his niece, but as his child.

Assuming the paternal also, Father Ragon said to Coryse: "I am so happy at this good fortune that God has sent you. Here I see truly the hand of God. Yesterday from over-delicacy and scruple from fear of not being a true and holy wife, you repulsed the Duke d'Aubières, who asked your hand, and was

willing to marry you without fortune; to-day the Lord rewards this conduct in placing you in such a way that your choice can be guided by your heart."

"But," Chiffon said, not guessing the drift of the Jesuit's remarks, "I don't see why, because my uncle has inherited from his aunt, I can be better able to choose according to my heart—admitting that my heart had a desire to choose something."

"It is very clear, however—" Father Ragon continuing to talk to himself as well as Coryse—"that the Viscount de Bray will give a fine dot to the child that he looks upon nearly as his own—and he an old fellow without near relations."

Coryse began to laugh: "Oh, I see your idea. You think that the good offers are over? and I said a short time since that M. d'Aubières' proposal had given me more value. Yes, since that they look upon me with respectful curiosity; what is that worth now?—honors! money! all for me! Will that change me?"

While she was talking the Jesuit saw the little Barfleur sitting under a tree, and began

to exchange affectionate signals with him. Pointing to the young man the Jesuit said to Chiffon: "That is Hugues Barfleur, one of my old pupils."

She replied, without interest: "I know, I have met him."

Father Ragan went on to say that he was one of the faithful, coming each day to mass —"A great soul! who did nothing displeasing to God."

"I don't know," the little girl replied, "if his flirtations with Madame Delorme are so pleasing to God."

The Jesuit made a gesture of indignant protestation and sincere surprise. Until now he had doubted nothing, but the inconvenient reflection of the little d'Avesnes threw a new light upon a thousand details not perceived until now. Anxious to stop her suspicions and serve his old scholar, he said in his most insinuating tone: "In the mouth of a young girl such remarks are out of place. You are lacking in judgment, my child. Hugues de Barfleur would not care to be amused with the person you mention; not only because his principles defend him

against that sort of temptation, but also because I have reason to know that his thoughts are elsewhere."

"Oh, indeed!" Coryse answered vaguely.

"Yes! the poor boy has lost his heart. He loves a young girl who, I fear, does not return his affection."

"A young girl? who can she be?" Suddenly she became enlightened, and with a burst of laughter asked if the young girl was not herself. Looking at the Jesuit with admiration, she thought that he had lost no time.

Father Ragon looked at her with smiling lips but a hard eye. Then she excused herself:

"I beg pardon for laughing in this way, but it is so funny—the money which would hurt M. Bernay will be of value to M. Barfleur. It will not go out of the house. Ah! I need not say that I understand."

"Miss d'Avesnes!" the Jesuit said with a cutting voice, "when your mother said that you were a young girl badly reared, she was right."

"Right to think it, but not to say it," Chif-

fon answered. Bowing to the Jesuit, who left her, she tried to find old John. She saw him quiet on his bench. Mechanically she rounded her lips—but stopped a little frightened. She thought, "I have not whistled as I do sometimes. What an effect it would have produced!"

In leaving the Jesuits she began to run, forgetting the old man behind her was stretching out his old legs with much pain; she wanted to take the news to the Abbé Châtel, feeling sure that she would enjoy her visit.

At the corner of the Palace street, a flower seller was stationed with his little cart. Chiffon took some roses, and, always in a run, soon arrived at the parsonage of Saint Marcien.

If the parsonage of the cathedral was not gaudy, that of Saint Marcien was indeed pitiful—a little hovel at the back of the old church in a black and dirty narrow street. To the left of this a miserable garden, not at all what might be termed a curate's garden. The Abbé Châtel, who adored flowers, had transformed it into a bower of perfume, this

poor little corner of miserable earth. The servant had gone to market, so the abbé opened the door for Coryse. He held in one hand a little preserve pot for the moment filled with paste, and with the other an enormous brush despoiled of much of its hair.

"I must beg pardon for receiving you on this way," he said to Chiffon, who greeted him joyously. He explained that he was about to begin papering his parlor, and he showed her the pieces which had fallen from the wall owing to the great dampness. The furniture can be summed up in six straw chairs, an old broken sofa, a good clock of worm-eaten wood, and a statue of the Blessed Virgin in alabaster resting on the wall above a little stand upon which was a vase.

"I have brought some roses for your Holy Virgin," Chiffon said, putting the flowers in the vase,—"but you must give them some water quickly."

"Yes—very soon."

"No, at once! it would be barbarous to make them wait in this heat, and you know the Blessed Virgin would not have anything suffer for her. Is it not so?"

"You are right," the priest answered, and filled the vase from a spout in the garden.

Looking at him Coryse thought: "He is not distinguished, nor stylish with his honest red face under his white hair like a tomato in cotton; but I like him, because he has a beautiful soul! Instead of busying himself with pulling down his poor friends and marrying the little chippies who are played out—he thinks of the forlorn and bereft and of the good God. There is one who ignores pinchbeck, and intrigues, and flirts, and all that fuss."

When the abbé returned, bringing with him the vase so full that the water spilled out over his soutane, Coryse said, "Oh, my dear abbé, I am happy."

"Truly so?—not as yesterday morning?" He took the roses with his big, awkward hands, and arranged them badly but with infinite care. When he had finished he took his seat by Coryse.

"Dear abbé, since this morning Uncle Marc has become very, very rich!"

"How is that, my child?"

"He has not robbed a coach—oh no! he

has inherited the fortune of his aunt Madame de Crisville."

"Then she is dead?"

"Naturally, dear abbé!"

"Oh, this poor woman! who was so generous to the poor and unhappy!"

"Uncle Marc will be as good as she. You will see how many poor we will find."

"God hears you, my child!"

"But it seems as if you doubted it."

"No, I do not, but it would not be surprising if Marc, who is young yet, should be less occupied with these things than his aunt."

"Young! is Uncle Marc young?"

"Well, he is not old."

"I don't say that he is declining! but he is not very young, since he is three years the junior of M. d'Aubières, who is old."

"Tell me about him, my child."

"Oh," Coryse answered, with a sigh of relief, "he went this morning!"

"What! gone?"

"Oh, not forever! he will return. It makes no difference; if I had known that you would not have been more excited than this, I would

not have dragged poor old John here when the thermometer is at thirty-five degrees. I would have let you hear the news from everybody."

"My child, you quite misunderstand me. I am happy, sincerely so, at the good fortune of your uncle and also at this great joy it seems to give you."

"Thanks, dear abbé, I am rewarded! It is nearly twelve o'clock."

While Chiffon was trotting home in the hot sun, the Abbé Châtel, in arranging for the last time nis lovely roses in the parlor at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, said to himself:

"O God, protect this child who loves you! and I pray thee to give her happiness!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"Don't you know it?" Chiffon said to her Uncle Marc, who had returned after an absence of fifteen days; "everybody is down upon you. Your letter to the electors has revolutionized Pont-sur-Sarthe. They have this idea in their heads!"

"Oh, I don't care!"

"Yes, I know that, but for me to hear everybody striking at you in this way—it makes me sick!"

"What, everybody?"

"Yes, all the old bores who come to the house. I don't know why I say the old ones, for the young ones are just as bad. There is my mother; day before yesterday she returned in a fever because she read your treasonable article placarded on the walls."

"What did she say?"

"She had a scene with papa—a genuine one, I tell you!"

"Finer than usual?"

"Oh yes, greater than ever!"

"Poor Peter!" the viscount said, laughing.

"How wicked you are to laugh; he is so good!"

"Yes, he is good; if it was me."

"And me also. This only proves that he is better than either of us. Chiffon, this is a happy life for me here under these conditions! You say that your mother is furious with me?"

"What difference does this make?"

"Why, she treats me as if I was a negro! She has always done it, and now my election!"

"Yes, but there is your inheritance! If your election displeases her, your inheritance enchants her. She respects money; you know it!"

After a while, she asked him if he had finished his business.

"Nearly."

"And you are rich?"

"Yes, very!"

"So much the better, for M. de Bernay is stirring them up strongly, and you had better take care of him."

"What do you know about it?"

"I have heard it."

"From whom?"

"The workmen at the upper furnace."

Uncle Marc began to laugh.

"So you have been talking with the workmen at the upper furnace? Poor Aubières is right; you are a funny, good little woman!"

"Have you seen M. d'Aubières?"

"Yes!"

"Will he soon come back?"

"Yes: he returns for the races."

The breakfast bell rang, and Madame de Bray entered the room smiling from ear to ear, and ran up to her brother-in-law to congratulate him upon his return, telling him how delighted she was, and how much they had all missed him; "have we not, Chiffon?"

The marchioness had never been so amiable before to her brother-in-law, and she had never called her daughter Chiffon except before some new-comer when she posed for wheedling tenderness. Marc looked at her with surprise, lowering his eyes when he saw Coryse's bantering expression. She was laughing behind her mother's back.

Madame de Bray asked if he had seen her husband.

"Yes, I saw him on my arrival."

"Has he warned you of the terrible effect of your letter to the electors? My dear Marc, you have no idea of the uproar, not of a flattering kind, in connection with your name."

"As this is your name also, I must beg pardon."

"Oh, war is war, and I have taken my stand. To be frank with you, from the beginning I was disheartened, absolutely astounded. Is it not so?" appealing to her husband, who had just entered the room. "Now I am somewhat consoled by Marc's placards, and have played my part bravely."

"You have told me so," her husband replied.

In passing through the dining-room Chiffon whispered to her Uncle Marc: "Fine fix, eh! didn't I tell you so?—the money."

"Coryse," the marchioness said, seating herself, "I don't know if I remembered to tell you that we dine on Saturday with the Barfleurs."

"No, you never tell me when you dine in town."

"You are invited."

"That makes no difference, as I am not going."

"Why not?" her mother asked.

"Because I never go to these dinners, and it was agreed upon that I should not be taken into the world until the winter following my eighteenth year. That will be in two years."

"Oh, this is not going into the world!"

"Yes, it means to dress!—to show one's self, to be dreadfully bored! This is what I call going into the world!"

"But I have accepted for you."

"It makes no difference. You have promised that I should not be obliged to appear in society except at home until I am eighteen, and I don't see why I should give the preference to the Barfleurs this evening, and not to Madame Bassigny." She added laughingly, "The other day in the garden at the Jesuit College she invited you, also, Uncle Marc, but feared that you would not honor her by accepting."

"This proves that Madame Bassigny has

certain moments of lucidity. I would never go to her house, especially now that I am in mourning."

Chiffon glanced at her mother's dress, a frock of a very delicate mauve, so undecided that it might be taken easily for rose.

The marchioness excused herself, saying that it was only a mourning of three months, and fifteen days of it had already expired.

"By the way, Marc, *à propos* to this, I want to ask you if a ball here would be disagreeable to you on the Sunday of the races?"

"Not at all, if I am not expected to appear."

"But if you should stay away I might be blamed."

"It makes no difference; I will not go to a ball the month after the death of an aunt who has left me all her fortune. It would not only be heartless but in bad taste."

The marchioness said that they had no such motive, and she wished to give a ball for Coryse.

"For me indeed!" and the little girl told her that she detested balls and the world; she could not even dance properly. "A ball for me indeed!"

"It is just to teach you how to appear in the world, and it will give you a taste for it."

This time Chiffon resisted entirely:

"Come, no one will believe this story of a ball given for me. Every one knows that I have no power in this house, and that whatever is done here is not for me!"

"You are an ungrateful and impertinent girl," her mother told her with a voice so loud that it seemed to vibrate in her eyebrows.

"No, I am not ungrateful, but you had better tell Uncle Marc and others the truth. The ball is to astound the simple people of the country in letting them see the prince."

Marc de Bray asked, who was this prince?

"Oh, you have not seen him yet? he came eight days ago to Pont-sur-Sarthe, a live true prince—one who will reign if his father is not put out before. His name is d'Axen."

"What is he doing here?"

Before her mother could answer, Chiffon said: "We don't know exactly. They say he is here to assist at the manœuvres, or to perfect himself in French, which he speaks better than we do."

"What sort of fellow is he?"

His sister-in-law said he was very charming; but Chiffon added, "That depends upon taste. He is as tall as a boot, and black, very black. M. Carnot is blond in comparison with him. They call him 'My lord' and 'Your Highness.' You understand; it is delicious!"

Her father, seeing the coming storm, told her that he was addressed as his title demanded.

"Oh, that is all very natural," Coryse said. "I speak to him in this way, but some are amused by it;" looking at her mother she added, "Humility is not my forte!"

Of the many sides to the marchioness' character none shocked Coryse so much as her arrogance to plain people and her humility with the great. Often after crushing a servant or workman with her superiority, which her daughter refused to recognize, Madame de Bray complained of the stupidity of those that she called mercenaries. Chiffon, both amused and angry, often told her that if they possessed the qualities she desired they would be ambassadors and not servants.

Little Corsye thought it quite right to respect princes when chance brought one near them, but quite unnecessary to run after them. She hated constraint and loved to live alone or with her equals. Then it seemed to her that modern princes seemed to have forgotten that they were princes, and that it was in bad taste to be constantly reminding them of it.

Since the arrival of Count d'Axen in Pont-sur-Sarthe, the marchioness swam in joy, greatly flattered to have received a visit from his highness. He had been sent by M. d'Aubières, who some years earlier had been military attaché in the small domain ruled by his father. Madame de Bray was obliged in Paris to run here and there to meet such distinguished people, who gave her but little attention, and, totally severed from all this at Pont-sur-Sarthe, she thought the heavens had opened when a letter came addressed to her husband, in which the colonel announced the coming of an hereditary prince.

This time the most elegant drawing-rooms were completely distanced, for the Count d'Axen knew at Pont-sur-Sarthe only four

generals, the major, and the prefect. Without pity for Madame Bassigny, her best friend, Madame de Bray threw her head in the air and said it was such a bore not to be able to get up something for the prince, but he refused to meet any one. She did not wish to share his highness, who had fallen so providentially in her hands! There were many pretty and elegant women in Pont-sur-Sarthe, and it was to be feared if the little prince was once launched in society he might be unfaithful to the house of Bray.

He at last forced the marchioness out of her reserve, and told M. de Bray one day of a ball he heard was to be given at the Barfleur château, and begged for an invitation.

"What! a ball?" The marchioness was amazed.

"Yes," the count added, "in dining at a restaurant I heard something of it. It is not quite certain, but will probably be given on the Sunday of the races."

Madam de Bray was furious. "They cannot give it on that day, as on that date we give a ball to the prince."

They had never spoken of a ball. The

marquis and Chiffon looked at each other, amazed at this aplomb, but Madame de Bray was not in the least abashed by their presence, and turning to her husband asked him if they had not decided long ago upon this date for their ball.

The next day she sent the invitations, showing that she had the honor of knowing him before everybody. Fearing the conversation might again take a disagreeable turn, the marquis ventured to say that if Chiffon would not dine on Saturday with the Barfleurs, she had better write.

The marchioness replied in her decided manner, "She will go."

"I cannot go if I wished," Coryse said. "I have no dress."

"What! no dress? Where is your pompadour? Does that mean nothing?"

"It means that two years ago I had a mousseline-de-laine frock with little bouquets, and that you call it my pompadour dress. I have grown two heads in two years and the dress has not lengthened with me, therefore I have no dress."

"It can be lengthened."

"It has been three times, and it cannot be matched."

"How is it that you have nothing to wear?"

Chiffon was angry, and said that with five louis a month for her toilette, including shoes, gloves, hats, riding habits, etc., she could not buy evening dresses.

M. de Bray intervened. "Go and get what you wish and send me the bill."

"Thanks, papa! I will get a lovely white dress for the prince's ball."

Her mother's voice was raised in a threatening manner, "I forbid you to call it the prince's ball!" After a little silence she added: "It is understood that you will go to the dinner."

Chiffon protested that she would not.

"Well, in this case you will go on horseback and say to Madame Barfleur that you dine on Saturday with your Aunt de Launay and cannot accept her invitation."

"Oh yes," Coryse said laughingly; "I will tell a good story and bring you all in. I will go and dress, and if I am to return for my studies I must trot."

Her mother told her in her most majestic

way that she would permit her to leave the table this time before the end of breakfast. "Don't take this, however, in the future as a precedent."

Coryse replied peevishly that she would remain if she wished. She could send John with a note which would answer as well. She then resumed her seat.

"You will go!" her mother ordered.

"No, I won't! You have some project on hand in sending me to the Barfleurs."

Madame de Bray became red and denied the accusation.

Again the marquis tried to smooth matters. "Come, little Chiffon, do as mamma wishes."

Coryse looked at him and gave him a touch of warning under the table. It was too late, the marchioness had heard this common word mamma, and was furious with her husband. She turned to Chiffon and ordered her from the room.

"Yes, I will go," her daughter answered, folding her napkin with affected slowness. In going out she said between her teeth, "Oh! if M. d'Aubières was not so old!"

CHAPTER IX.

On arriving in the court of the Barfleur château, a large building of brick and granite of the Louis XV. period, Coryse saw the viscountess at the window of the ground floor very busy covering little jars of preserves. She was so deeply absorbed in her work that she did not hear the horses on their arrival. At first Chiffon thought she would ride near the window and have her little chat there, but feeling that this would not be quite the polite thing she dismounted at the stables, where she was told that the viscountess was at home.

She was shown into the billiard-room, where she was kept waiting a long time. Pacing up and down this naked room without a picture or a book or a flower, she said to herself angrily:

"Is that Barfleur woman going to finish covering those jars of sweetmeats before she receives me?"

Finally the servant appeared. "If Miss d'Avesnes will come, the viscountess will be happy to see her in the drawing-room. I have been looking for her in the park."

Coryse thought: "No, she was in the basement, but thinks it would not be *chic* for me to know it."

She trotted behind the servant through a long suite of rooms which looked rather bare. "Oh," she said shivering, "it is not amusing here. Father Ragon and mother Barfleur are mistaken if they think that I am going to marry '*Two farthings of butter.*' Oh no!"

On the arrival of the Duke d'Aubières in the county he had seen little Barfleur standing near a door at a ball, and had asked Uncle Marc: "Who is that little man as large as two farthings of butter?" At the Brays' and other houses this name had stuck to him.

Coryse was shown into a little parlor, better furnished and more comfortable than the rest of the château. Seated near a window, her long thin waist drawn into a dress of gray foulard with yellow dots, the viscountess seemed to be absorbed in *le Gaulois*. The little girl thought, "It is strange—the dress

of the preserves was gray. She has put on this fine frock to receive me. She has dressed up for Chiffon! Since Uncle Marc has inherited money!"

"My dear child," the viscountess said in rising to meet Coryse, "what good wind has brought you?" Without giving her time to reply she said, "How lovely you are in your riding-habit! What a darling!"

"Darling!" Chiffon repeated, glancing at her big arms and large hands, and all her person a little awkward; "they don't tell me this at home!"

Madame de Barfleur was not abashed. "Yes you are a charming creature!" She drew the long band of old tapestry on silk canvas which served as a bell-rope. "My poor Hugues will be so distressed to miss this little visit; he has gone to look at his horses in a field near the sea. I will send for him."

"Oh, madame," Coryse said quite energetically, "I must be going. I have my studies at four o'clock."

The servant came in.

"Say to Master Hugues——"

Coryse explained that she only came to

tell her that her mother had quite forgotten her engagement to dine with her Aunt de Launay on Saturday when she accepted for her.

Madame de Barfleur would not hear of this arrangement, and begged that she would change her plans.

Chiffon did not answer, but listened smilingly during the pulling of the bell for the young man, and thought, "It will take him at least a quarter of an hour to come up from the river, and in five minutes I will be off."

The viscountess insisted: "Do come, dear little Coryse! tell me that you will find a way. You will be the soul and joy of this dinner."

"Me? when I am never at my ease or say three words."

Madame de Barfleur begged to know why, and Chiffon, blushing, told her that she had no confidence in herself and that was quite plain. Then excusing herself she hoped to get off, but was asked to remain to lunch, which she declined.

The viscountess rose with her and begged that she might see her mount, as her son had

told her how adorable she was on horseback.

"This is detestable!" Corsye said to herself; "they are all alike."

At the moment that old John led the horses to the steps, the Viscount de Barfleur came running into the court. He took the hand which Chiffon extended toward him and kissed it most respectfully. Little accustomed to this sort of thing, she burst out laughing. In comparing the manner of mother and son with their conduct only fifteen days before, a great awakening seized her and she almost thought aloud, "This is an odious type!"

When Coryse came near Joséphine, her very beautiful and high-blooded mare, the viscount ran toward her, placing his hands together to assist her in mounting. She glanced at the frail young man bending his poor little back, and at his thin neck and enormous head, and the poor arms exposed when pushing back his plaid cuffs of exaggerated English style.

"Surely he would drop me on the road," she thought.

Trying to be as gracious as possible, she motioned to John to bring the horses, saying that she was awkward and mounted best with her servant. He still insisted, but she declined, telling him that he had no idea how heavy she was.

She placed the tip of her boot in old John's palm, and, bowing to the mother and son, cantered off at a fast rate, showing off to advantage her supple figure upon her beautiful Joséphine.

As soon as Chiffon had left the park she turned into the wood. She wanted to gallop in the beautiful green lanes, which was restful in her excited state.

"Oh, one can't be left alone for a moment! Two weeks ago I was tormented to marry M. d'Aubières. Now it is little Barfleur."

She was not only annoyed at this new struggle brought upon her, but her self-esteem was greatly wounded. The proposal of M. d'Aubières was flattering, but that of M. Barfleur was humiliating. She knew that the attentions of "Two farthings of butter" had been very slight when she was poor, and this thought made her detest this little fellow

with his big mustache and bandied legs. She thought of d'Aubières as a great man, but Barfleur as the little Barfleur.

Chiffon was so healthy and buxom that she recoiled from delicacy—she began to think, on the way to Pont-sur-Sarthe, "If he should ever try to kiss me as d'Aubières did, I would slap him in the face. I could not help it. I don't care, but this is going to be a tiresome affair; if I refuse him my mother will be down upon me. It would be best for the refusal to come from the Barfleurs. Oh, this old beast Father Ragon! He has managed this! I am right in being afraid of the Jesuits!" She stopped in the road whitened by the sun. "It will be dreadful to come down this way to Pont-sur-Sarthe! I will try the road behind the furnace. At this hour there are not too many smoking meat, and I hope Joséphine will go by gently."

On turning the mare in this direction she began to prick up her ears at the noise which came from below in a little path between the wood and the forge.

At a turn in the road Coryse saw, a hundred yards below her, a gentleman talking to

some workmen seated on the edge of the wood.

"Oh!" she said, turning to John, "there they are! I have missed my studies. It is four o'clock!" and winking her eyes, she stopped to try and see if it was not Count d'Axen.

"Oh yes, Miss Coryse, I am quite sure it is he."

In a turn of the road Chiffon lost sight of the group, but soon heard their voices quite plainly.

"Yes," the prince said, whose musical voice she recognized—"yes, it is good, this profession of faith, and if I was an elector in this country I would not hesitate to give my voice to him who has written it."

Chiffon turned the bend of the road. "Oh it is you, sir!" she said no more, guessing vaguely that he might prefer not to be addressed by name here, and he thanked her by a sign in his reply:

"Yes, Miss d'Avesnes, it is I."

"Look here, sir," said one of the workmen, laughing, "there is a pretty young lady for you."

"What is it?" Coryse asked.

"This is a gentleman who says as you do, that we had better vote for M. de Bray."

Chiffon said with an air of conviction, "At least you would not nominate M. de Bernay?"

"Oh no, we would not do that again!"

"Ah, well,—since you know that Charlie would not be elected?"

"Yes that is true! but I cannot get over M. de Bray's being a viscount."

"He also is worried at this," Chiffon added, "but it is not his fault——"

"Why did he sign his placard Viscount de Bray?"

"Why? Because it is his name. Would you prefer that he should deceive you and present himself differently from what he is?"

Seeing the number of bottles and the sausages and cheese on the grass, Chiffon asked them if they had not had a good lunch. A dark-looking workman got up and pointed to Count d'Axen. "It is this gentleman who has feasted us; but for him——"

Old John, red and perspiring, looked at the bottles with a longing eye.

Coryse pointed him out to one of the men,

and said, "If you want to be very good you will give him a glass of something, for he must be very warm."

The workman glanced at the bottle and excused himself. "If we did not offer it to him, it was seeing that he was a lackey, when the masters were here."

"He is not my lackey; he is my nurse," and Chiffon called him to have a drink.

Old John came forward, saying he was too thirsty to refuse; "And you, Miss Coryse, you must be thirsty too."

The workman ran to the brook to rinse the glass for her.

She came forward with her glass and said in a clear voice, "Your health!"

The workmen got up. "It is rather to the health of monsieur, who has treated us, that we should drink"—pointing to Count d'Axen.

"And I," the prince replied—"I propose to drink to the health of the candidate."

"That is so!" Coryse said, "to the health of Uncle Marc!"

One of the workmen asked if she was the niece of M. de Bray?

"Oh, yes," Chiffon said, looking at the

prince, who laughed at her absence of mind.

The workman added, "Oh, we knew you well, but we don't know your name. Your friends are principally those funny people down there in the city." Turning toward the Count d'Axen he continued: "This young lady has always money in her pockets for us when she passes by on horseback, and at Christmas fills her carriage with boxes of toys. His small, hard eyes softened a little, and he said: "If all the rich were as Miss d'Avesnes and monsieur things would be better. Many of them doubt this misery, and until now I have known only these."

"I also," Chiffon added, thinking of her mother. She then asked Count d'Axen if he was going toward Pont-sur-Sarthe.

He begged to be permitted to join her. "We had best take the road through the wood, this is so full of rolling stones."

When they had gotten into the wood Coryse heard the voice of the workman who was discoursing about her: "I have an idea that these two are engaged!"

Coryse turned laughingly toward the prince

and told him the speech. He bowed courteously.

"I regret that they are mistaken."

"Do you regret it? That is so nice and polite of you! Do you see the appearance that I would make as queen? No, do you see it? What would you do with me?" and after a minute she added, "And what would I do with you?"

He began to laugh: "How old are you, Miss Coryse?"

"I will be sixteen in May; and how old are you, monsieur?"

"I will be twenty-four in eight days." Feeling some scruple, he asked if her mother would permit her to ride with young men.

"No, not generally, but you are a sovereign! That is not a young man; it doesn't count," and blushing she added, "It counts too much—to count." Changing the conversation she asked him if he was not afraid to do as he had done—a stranger on the side of the opposition.

"Oh no; my political opposition consists in saying to the workmen, if I was in their place I would vote for your uncle."

"That is so, but in your place I would be afraid. I wish M. d'Aubières was here; he would tell you what you should or should not do, for you seem to me to be a little young yet for these things."

"You are interested in me?" and the prince laughed heartily.

"I am interested without being interested."

"That is something! How one can be deceived! I could have sworn, and I am something of a prophet, that not only you were not interested in me, but that I was antipathetic to you."

"That is true," Coryse said frankly, "until this moment; and you now seem to be a fine fellow."

"Then we are friends?"

"Yes,—oh, my lord, I must ask pardon; I have spoken unkindly to you."

"Oh no!"

"Yes, I have not said often enough, 'my lord,' and I have never said 'your highness.'"

"Oh, don't bother yourself about that: and as we are friends now, will you tell me why we were not before? That is, you—I had not the same repulsion, I assure you."

"Yes, I will tell you; it was instinct. I don't love foreigners, and I detest Protestants, and as you are both, you can understand."

"Yes, I do, but what have you against foreigners?"

"Oh, I can't forgive them for not being Frenchmen, and for being Protestants?—a lot of things! They are intriguers, false, hypocrites. I acknowledge some exceptions."

"Naturally me?"

She laughed. "Not only you but some others. I speak of the mass of Protestants—in France especially. They are the only ones I know."

"Seeing this repulsion with which I have inspired you, I suppose you took me for a spy."

"Oh, my lord, never! I think spies are often suspected where they do not exist, like the mad dogs who are killed when they are not."

Returning to a subject which interested her, Chiffon told him it was so nice of him to work for the election of Uncle Marc.

"Don't be so grateful for this, for I must

confess the conversation you heard was by chance. These men took care of my horse while I visited the furnace. I did not know who held him, and feared if I gave money to one, the others would be down upon me, so I went to the inn and brought them a lunch. They offered to drink with me, and in drinking with them I talked about the candidate whose bill was placarded on the buildings of the furnace. You see that my propaganda came from a little thing after all."

"It serves the purpose. You will see how nice Uncle Marc is, now that he has come back. I know that you will find the house less tiresome."

But the prince protested. "I have not——"

Chiffon interrupted him: "You could not of course acknowledge this to me, and, my lord, you were not shocked at Uncle Marc's socialistic proclamation—because he is a socialist."

"But *I* am also a socialist!"

She begged him not to speak of that at Pont-sur-Sarthe; that would not look well. "So you are a socialist, my lord; that will not prevent you from reigning?"

"I hope not, but if it does prevent I will resign. That would be the right thing, would it not?"

"Yes, my lord."

"It would be very easy; I have six brothers; aud you, Miss Coryse, came to make an electioneering tour when I had the pleasure of meeting you?"

"No, I had a commission at the Barfleurs."

"Is not M. Barfleur a little man and very thin? Is he not also very English?"

"Yes, of the kind at Pont-sur-Sarthe."

"Has he not also a very beautiful château?"

"Tolerably pretty, but his mother owns it."

"Is his mother agreeable?"

"Oh no, she is a big woman, forever posing, and assumes a sad look. I am always tempted to call her the unfortunate princess; and *he*—they call him *Two farthings of butter*."

As Count d'Axen laughed, Chiffon explained:

"I am not wicked or satirical, you know, but I can't bear the Barfleurs!"

"There are only mother and son?"

"That is indeed enough of them."

"I will probably meet them at the ball to be given by your mother the day of the races."

"You will certainly meet them, but what good will come of it?"

"I am curious to see how provincial society appears after Paris; that I know a little."

"If you knew how mean it is! pinchbeck, all on the same level. I know that you are above all this."

"But I am not above anything."

"Outwardly if you will; and now, my lord, I think it would be better for you not to mention that we rode together alone?"

"Oh you are afraid of the pinchbecks?"

"No, but I fear that my mother might take me away if she hears this."

"Then what must I do?"

"Don't speak of it, and I will not, if they don't ask me, and as they will not ask it is not probable that they will guess our meeting."

"If by chance they should guess, we would say yes."

"That is understood, and now we had bet-

ter separate before going out of the wood. I must beg pardon for all my faults, my lord?" and she added with a laugh: "I bow most profoundly to your highness."

The prince took off his hat with a grand air and laughingly replied, "I salute you most profoundly, Miss Chiffon!"

CHAPTER X.

For eight or nine days Chiffon could not move without meeting little Barfleur. He came also to the Brays very often under the pretext of commissions sent by his mother. One evening Coryse found him installed by her mother in the dining-room. She saw the viscount arrive in his little wagon about six o'clock, and she thought he had left long ago. The marchioness seemed to be in fine humor and said that M. de Barfleur had promised to dine with them, and they would take him back in the carriage in the afternoon.

During the heated term M. and Mme. de Bray drove every day after dinner, taking Chiffon with them. The ordeal was odious to the little girl. Seated in the landau opposite her parents she could neither budge nor laugh, so she remained quiet and bored, as she was always in her mother's presence, always dreading a scene.

When Marc de Bray entered the room his

face expressed astonishment in seeing little Barfleur. Coryse began to laugh, and when her mother came in the dining-room on the arm of the viscount she said to Uncle Marc, who seemed thoroughly annoyed, "You did not expect this, did you?"

Without appearing to notice the anxious look of his brother he replied, "Well, he belongs to the house now, '*Two farthings of butter.*' "

"Not yet," Chiffon said laughingly, "but he is trying to be!"

Uncle Marc stopped short. "What is it you mean to say?"

M. de Bray with an imploring look pushed them before him; "Go in, my children—go in!"

The marchioness with an angry expression pointed to M. Barfleur standing behind his chair waiting for them. From the beginning of the dinner the viscount, being placed opposite Coryse, began to gaze at her passionately and persisted in it. The little girl was so near-sighted that she scarcely noticed it, but Marc de Bray was very angry at the impertinence.

"What is the matter, uncle? You look as if you could gnash your teeth?"

"I am vexed," he answered—"It is nothing! I have a headache."

Notwithstanding the pretended sickness he chatted away with his niece without giving her time to turn her head to one side or the other.

The marchioness, much worried at this conduct, tried to get Chiffon to join in the general conversation, but she always avoided it. Not being able to gain her point by tact, she decided to break the ice.

"Coryse! Your conduct is decidedly out of place! You are making a noise, but we can't hear what you say!"

The little girl was quiet and did not finish a sentence begun, indeed did not open her mouth again.

The marchioness added: "I don't prevent you from talking or replying to M. Barfleur, who says that——"

Chiffon in a very gentle and polished tone said: "M. Barfleur only talks of hunting and races, and I detest them and know nothing about them."

Little Barfleur asked with much eagerness, "What do you like to talk about, Miss Coryse?"

She replied in the same modest tone, "I am very happy in not talking at all."

"One would not have supposed that a short time since," her mother chimed in with her harsh voice.

"Oh yes," Coryse added, "I know that I have been very noisy and must beg pardon;" looking steadily at her plate she remained silent until the end of the dinner.

When coffee was served in the billiard-room Chiffon went out and sat on the steps in a big bamboo chair, rocking away and looking at the stars which appeared pale in the heavens, still light. She was aroused by her mother, who came out with her hat on.

"What—not ready? The carriage is coming up! Your carelessness is dreadful!"

The little girl did not stir. "I will come when you return for something you have forgotten."

Uncle Marc burst out laughing, and M. de Bray turned his head to hide a smile.

The marchioness became purple and in a

threatening tone asked Chiffon what she meant.

Chiffon repeated, quite unmoved, that every evening she returned to the house for something she had forgotten; and in a low tone added, "This evening you may return twice." Her allusion was to one of the weaknesses of her mother, a weakness that the marchioness thought no one guessed, so confident was she of overruling any opinion which might not be flattering to her. Adoring luxury and show, all that to her mind might astonish and charm the public, Madame de Bray had wheedled her husband into changing his carriages and liveries, which were chosen by him with elegant simplicity. The landau, a blue body embossed with a big coat-of-arms, and light red wheels, was very grotesque, but the marchioness was only happy when going from one end of Pont-sur-Sarthe to the other in this conspicuous carriage. That was her reason for insisting so often upon being accompanied by her daughter. When the little girl was too much bored to go she took the victoria, which was more modest.

When Madame de Bray had taken an affected pose in the landau with its glittering harness and startling coat-of-arms, and could pass before the restaurants at the hour for vermouth or coffee, her joy was full. At six and eight o'clock the sidewalk was full of tables; the officers and swells of Pont-sur-Sarthe were out in full force at Gilbert's, the fashionable restaurant, or at the Café Péreault. Instead of telling her coachman to take a fine macadamized road somewhat deserted but leading directly out of the town, she ordered him to pass by the places horribly paved with little slippery stones. Often in entering one of these streets she would suddenly order the coachman to return to the house. Chiffon knew well her little way,—"Oh I have forgotten my parasol, or my cloak, or my muff, or my handkerchief," which obliged the coachman to pass for the third time before the café. She had a horror of these exhibitions, and when she saw the curious faces turned toward the carriage and heard the noise of the spurs and swords of the officers which were raised to salute them, she lowered her eyes, saying in a discontented

way, "Do they really feel all this to-do they are making over us?" she was furious, so simple in her character, hating exaggeration and being mixed up with this ridicule of her mother. The marquis and his brother had often talked about what the servants called a false start, but they had never spoken of this to Chiffon and were greatly amused by her reply.

The marchioness walked up to her daughter and in hissing tones asked what she meant by saying that she might return twice this evening. She came so near that her lips touched the saucy little nose of the child.

"Why?" Coryse replied; "because this evening you have *Two farthings of butter* to show to the public," having assured herself that little Barfleur, who pretended that he was looking for his hat at the end of the room, could not hear. While explaining herself she thought, in a few minutes she would be appearing before the world seated by the side of the viscount in the startling blue landau. Nothing more was needed in Pont-sur-Sarthe to convince them of an engagement, and this Coryse wished to escape at all events. She

had never before thought herself of much importance. In her own eyes she was always Chiffon, the teller of funny little stories, that no one took seriously. M. d'Aubières' proposal and Father Ragon's insinuations had made her realize that she was now a young girl that was loved by one, and that the *protege* of the other feigned love. Before giving her mother time for another scene, she said:

"Don't give yourself any trouble about me. I am tired and won't go out."

"That is not so! You are never tired, it is a pretext."

"Be it so, I will not go out this evening."

"You will go out."

"I ask your permission to remain at home."

"Go and put on your hat!"

As Chiffon did not move, she seized her violently by the wrists.

The child broke away from her and said gently, "It is ridiculous, this scene before a stranger."

The marchioness, turning toward M. Barfleur and suddenly changing her expression into smiles, said: "Oh! M. Barfleur is nearly a member of the family."

"What!" the little girl replied, "I think not. He does not begin to be one of the family."

After a little silence the marquis and *Two farthings of butter*, with coats on their arms and sticks in their hands, awaited the signal for departure.

Assuming a gracious air, the marchioness, turning to Coryse, said, "If I insist upon your going with us, my reason is that it is not proper for you to remain alone in the house."

"I stay alone constantly; and besides I am not alone, Uncle Marc is with me."

"But your uncle probably may go out."

Marc answered coldly: "You know very well, my dear sister-in-law, that I never go out in the evening."

"Then I leave Corysande with you."

Uncle Marc was a little nervous, and with a shrug of his shoulders, said, "Be sure that I will take good care of her. I won't let her get dirty or play with the light."

As little Barfleur leaned toward the hand which Coryse gave him mechanically and imprinted a long kiss upon it, he took his

niece by the arm and whirling her around said, "Let us go; do come, Chiffon!"

When they were in the parlor together, Coryse said gayly to her Uncle Marc: "There was a little scuffle this afternoon! And I was not necessary, as there was a third to force her to take the landau."

Seeing her uncle take his seat under the lamp and undo the wraps from his papers, she said: "Don't feel obliged to stay with me."

"I was going to say the same thing to you."

"Oh, I can do my work any where; only when papa goes out you usually do your work in your room."

He answered laughingly, "Yes—but those were winter evenings. You were never placed especially under my care until to-day."

Coryse got her tapestry, all bristling with animals and funny warriors that she copied from the designs of the tapestries of Bayeux, and seated herself by Uncle Marc. In a moment he stopped reading and looked over his paper at the little dishevelled head leaning so attentively over the diapered silk.

"Chiffon," he asked suddenly, "when be-

fore dinner, in speaking of this young *gommeaux*, 'Oh, he is a part of the house now,' you answered, 'Not yet, but he is trying to be.'"

"Oh yes," she said with her nose in the air.

"Well, I did not quite understand what you meant."

"I meant to say that '*Two farthings of butter*' wished to marry me."

The viscount jumped up. "That is what I guessed, but I could not believe it; and you speak so quietly of it—to marry you! This grotesque! It would be monstrous."

"Oh, you may be quiet, he will never marry me," Chiffon said laughingly.

Uncle Marc whispered, "How glad I am!" and she looked lovingly at him.

"You are so good to interest yourself so much in me!" After a little silence she added, "You are the cause of his wishing to marry me."

"Me?"

"Yes: as soon as they heard of your inheritance there was a rumor that I would be very rich, that you would give me a *dot*, and leave me all your fortune."

"That is true!"

"But your children?"

"*I* have children?"

"No—but when you are married——"

"I will never marry, my Chiffon. I would be afraid of stumbling upon a woman like—" He was going to say, "like your mother;" he stopped and said, "like some I have known. No, I am suspicious, and will remain an old bachelor."

"Oh, so much the better! Then if you wish——"

"If I wish?"

"I will go and live with you. I will keep the house. I don't want to marry either. When I am twenty-one I certainly will never stay here,—not a day. Notwithstanding poor papa, who is so good, though I have often failed in duty. I know that in other ways my absence would smooth away many of the little difficulties of existence; but never mind, he will regret his Chiffon."

The viscount, quite amazed, asked where she would go.

"I have always thought that I would ask Uncle Albert and Aunt Matilda to take me

back again; but if you would like me I would be so happy! I love you so much! if you only knew! Yes, more than papa I love you. It may be wrong, but I can't help it;" and in a passionate voice she finished. Leaning toward him, palpitating and tender, "I adore you, Uncle Marc!"

Leaning back on his chair, somewhat pale, he whispered, "I do not deserve being adored, my little Chiffon."

"Why not?"

"Instead of keeping house for your old bearish uncle you will marry—and have a lot of squalling babies who will take the place of Gribouille and old John."

She answered gravely: "May I tell you? I am sure that I will never marry; no one charms me!"

"What? There is poor d'Aubières, a handsome fellow, good and intelligent, but he begins to be a little old; as to the other he is a little monster."

Coryse began to laugh. "Don't say that to Madame Delorme!"

"Oh, you are *au courant* with the pinchbecks also? Madame Delorme is simply an

idiot, and what she likes in Barfleur is his name—his title—his English costumes—his horses and château."

"I suppose so, but it's something to be able to love somebody. I feel that I can never love any one."

He asked, a little disturbed, "Probably you love some one now?"

"Never in my life!" Chiffon answered with such conviction that Uncle Marc smiled, completely reassured.

She added: "No one pleases me—to marry I mean. There is Paul de Lussy, who is thought so nice, and M. de Trêne; I don't want them! I know that all this is ridiculous, and that I have no right to be so hard to please, with my appearance."

"With your appearance? What do you mean?" Uncle Marc asked.

"Why, I am ugly!"

He stammered, "Ugly? You?"

She answered sadly: "Oh, I know it, and that annoys me enough!"

"Your mother told you this. You are pretty—very pretty. Do you understand?"

"You tell me this to make me happy, or

probably you think so because you love me so much."

"Listen to me, Chiffon," Uncle Marc said. "I repeat it seriously, that you are, and that you will be in two or three years a very beautiful woman. Do you think that Aubières, who has had——"

As he stopped Coryse asked: "Who has had what?"

"I mean, do you think that Aubières, who has known so many, would have been so captivated with you if you were not pretty? No! you should know what you really are, and you can believe your old uncle who tells you so."

Then the little girl was joyful. "Chiffon is a pretty woman! a pretty woman! How funny! I am so happy, and so thankful to you for telling me, but that will not prevent my keeping your house? on the contrary," cajoling, "I beg you, Uncle Marc—I beg you to say yes, and don't go away, don't leave me here without you? If you knew how horrible these fifteen days have been? I cannot live without you! I cannot!"

Gliding down from her low chair Coryse

seated herself on the ground like a baby, and leaning on the viscount's knees her little head, which in the pale light of the lamp was like a nest of silvered moss, she begged plaintively with her tearful eyes: "Don't go away again? tell me never?"

With a movement almost brutal he tried to rise. She forced him to sit down with her arms clasped around him, and asked and pleaded: "Will you send me away? Why do you treat me so? I have often thought you were not the same; you used to take me on your knees and kiss me."

He answered coldly: "Formerly you were a child. Now you are past the age for this."

While two big tears rolled down on her pink cheeks she said, "One is always of an age to be loved."

"I do love you; I love you dearly," Marc de Bray answered with emotion, "only I beg you to stop this and sit down." While he tried to repulse her the bell of the gate rang, by a timid and hesitating hand.

Uncle Marc held up Chiffon a little roughly. "Get up; one must not behave in this way. Suppose it is a visitor?"

She got up and said laughingly, "A visitor? Who rings like that? When a man rings like that he is probably the lover of the cook."

The servant entered, announcing the Count d'Axen.

Coryse said, "The marchioness has gone out."

Uncle Marc said in a low tone, "Receive him," and was somewhat relieved.

Chiffon, somewhat surprised, begged him not to receive the count, saying how angry she was at the interruption. They were so happy together! Seeing her uncle looked pale, she was anxious to know the cause.

"Oh it is only the heat," her uncle said, "and it will be over in a minute."

He advanced to meet the prince, but Chiffon followed him pensively.

"My lord, my sister-in-law is out; it is my niece who presents me to your highness."

As the little girl seemed to be a thousand leagues away from the situation, he called: "Coryse! you did not understand?"

She ran gayly up to them; "Oh, you can say Chiffon, my lord knows the name well.

My lord, this is Uncle Marc, for whom you electioneered in the country."

Turning to the viscount, who seemed surprised, "I have not seen you alone since yesterday. Let me tell you; on my return from Barfleur I found my lord explaining to the workmen of the upper furnace that they must all vote for you. He will explain all this much better himself."

Uncle Marc began to offer his thanks, but Chiffon interrupted him: "You must not speak of this at the house, that I met my lord in the wood and rode with him," and turning toward the prince she said: "It is not the same thing with Uncle Marc. We can say anything to him."

Seeing the viscount listening with a grave expression and eyebrows elevated, one of his signs of discontent, she added sadly, "Except to-day. I don't know what is the matter with him; he is not himself at all."

The prince explained that he had come to thank Madame de Bray for her kind note.

"Another!" Chiffon thought; "she writes then twice a day."

Count d'Axen went on to say that she had

sent him invitations for her ball, and had also sent him a list of the invited should he wish to add to it. He wished to return this list, and placed the envelope on the table, adding that he must not disturb them longer.

"My lord," Uncle Marc insisted, "if you have no other engagement this evening we will be charmed to have you stay."

Chiffon left the room to order tea. Then she put Gribouille to sleep, and went to see if her flowers had been watered. On her return she found the two men in earnest conversation about matters which interested them deeply.

At eleven o'clock the prince left them, and Uncle Marc went with him to the gate. On his return Coryse asked his opinion of him. Uncle Marc said he found him so intelligent and nice that he was surprised at Coryse, who spoke of his being as tall as a boot and black or blacker than Carnot.

"But who do you think handsome?"

"Oh, I don't know—you!"

"Me?"

"Yes; I don't say that you are after the Greek type, but I like you as you are. I detest

fops and young men. I hate very young men; a man is not a man until he is thirty-five."

"It is a pity for poor d'Aubières that your limit goes back a little too far. I think the prince very charming."

"So do I now since our ride in the wood."

Uncle Marc raised his eyebrows again.

"Come, let us talk about this ride. Your mother is quite right: you behave like a girl badly reared. At your age should you be riding alone in a wood with a young man?"

"What, a king?"

"A king is a man!"

"If you say so, but I was not alone."

"Yes, you had old John; he is an idiot!"

This distressed the little girl. "Oh, Uncle Marc, how wicked you have become!"

"Wicked because I do not approve of your fancies? because I don't encourage you in flirting in the wood with all the do-nothings in the road?"

"Now he is a good-for-nothing! a short time ago he was a success!"

The viscount was angry: "I have had enough of your manners. It is true I have

spoiled you; I have laughed at your behavior like a runaway colt, which is no longer funny, and if I have encouraged you in all this I repent my course deeply."

In his firm voice one felt the hoarseness of tears. Chiffon tried to take his hand, but he drew it away violently.

Bowed down by most intense feeling which she tried to hide, she stammered out feebly: "Is it possible, Uncle Marc, that you have changed while away?"

CHAPTER XI.

THE day of the dinner at the Barfleurs M. de Bray took a dreadful cold, which affected his nose and lips and nearly closed his eyes. He had so much fever that he told his wife he would be utterly unable to go to the dinner, and would be obliged to go to bed until the next day. The marchioness became very angry, telling him that it was treating the Barfleurs very badly, as they had invited a party of fourteen and his absence would leave the fatal number of thirteen at table. She thought it would be very difficult so late in the day to supply his place.

M. de Bray was sorely distressed to be obliged to decline, but was too sick to go. He laughingly said to his wife:

"You think that thirteen at table would kill you in a year. I am sure that I would die if I ventured out to-day and should be one of the fourteen."

The marchioness proposed that Coryse should be one of the number.

The little girl said, "Never!" with conviction.

M. de Bray begged her: "My little Chiffon, this would be so nice of you."

"Oh no! don't beg me," and thinking she had an excellent excuse for staying at home, she explained: "First, I must dine with Uncle Marc; he would be alone, as you would go to bed."

Uncle Marc, who had not until then seen to notice what was said, protested with animation:

"Not at all! Don't think about me. What an idea! Upon my word, one would think that I required a nurse."

"No; but you have always said that it bored you to be alone at table."

"I never said that!"

"Oh yes, you have—a hundred times."

"Very well; if you want to be a good Chiffon you will go to this dinner with your mother. You will go to please me."

The girl looked at him with astonishment, almost with distress. "How is it," she

thought, "after all that he has said to me only two days ago of little Barfleur, and of this idea of marriage and all that, and now he wants to send me down there—I who go nowhere? it would seem as if I was running after him." So she answered:

"Under *no* circumstances will I go to the Barfleurs' this evening."

"Why not!" her mother asked.

"I told you the other day; I have no dress."

"The one your father has just given you?"

"I have ordered that for to-morrow; it is not finished."

"Very well. Your pompadour gown can be quickly arranged."

"My friends have seen me in long dresses for a year. They would be a little surprised; they would be at a loss what to say. Besides, if they don't add to it, with strong thread, my pompadour frock will be above my knees when I sit down."

Uncle Marc got up: "Go and get your hat. I will take you, and I promise that you will have a dress in time."

Coryse still resisted: "You are mad also

to make me go down there. Very well; I will go to please you."

Going out of the parlor she thought, giving Uncle Marc a reproachful glance, "He does not want to be alone with me like the other evening; but, *mon Dieu*, why not?"

The viscount took Chiffon to the first dressmaker in Pont-sur-Sarthe, one that she had heard of only, and she mounted the steps with respect. Not only her modest income did not admit of her being dressed by Madame Bertin, but her mother did not employ this great artist. Totally without taste, incapable of discerning the beauty of a dress well cut, or the ugliness of one badly made; not understanding differences in color or trimmings, and only occupied with materials, for her a woman's attire was reduced to what was showy or not. In speaking of a dress or of some material its effectiveness was her only idea. No matter how delicious the stuff it became an unknown quantity when judged by this standard. Seeing some women wearing it, she would say: "It is surprising that Madame K. spends so much money and has nothing which is effective." To her, tailors

and expensive dressmakers were robbers. She only thought of the commercial price of materials, and could not comprehend that the cut changed everything.

It was the same thing in art; she could not understand why fifteen thousand francs should be given for a portrait, when one could be procured much finer for two thousand. A romance which was not stuffed with intrigue was hollow, and she wondered how any one could like Loti, who failed utterly in imagination.

Then Madame de Bray bought materials and had them made by obscure dressmakers in Pont-sur-Sarthe, whose taste was abominable. Chiffon did the same thing and arrived at the same results. Hers were a little better chosen and so simple in style—always the same, a kind of Russian blouse scarcely defining her elegant little body.

When Uncle Marc entered Madame Bertin's parlor, followed by his niece, Coryse was surprised to see that he knew the saleswomen, and soon her little brain was at work. What had Uncle Marc to do with dressmakers and those who did not serve Madame de Bray,

nor Luce de Givry, who dressed so simply, nor even Madame de Bassigny, who feared to meet doubtful people?

While waiting for Madame Bertin, who was busy fitting some one, Chiffon began to ask Uncle Marc questions:

"They seem to know you here? How is that?"

"I came—I have—I designed some costumes for the ball at the Lussacs' last year."

She corrected him: "A costume, not some costumes. Yes, I remember very well now; it was for Madame de Liron."

"That, and others."

"No; that and not others. That was enough of the pinchbecks!"

"Don't speak so loud!"

Chiffon said no one would hear. Pointing to the saleswomen going to and fro, she remained silent for a moment, perfectly absorbed, and all at once, as if continuing a conversation with herself, muttered, "One more woman who is deceiving her husband—Madame de Liron!"

"Hush!" her Uncle Marc begged, looking around him with a disturbed expression—"do

hush, I pray!" In an angry tone he said: "Young girls never should speak of things they don't understand; and of things they ought not to understand."

"I know very well that I ought not to understand, and that I know very little, but I hear, don't I?—unless I put cotton in my ears like cousin La Balue."

"One hears only what they wish to listen to!"

"Oh no! I never listen, and I always hear! Sometimes I would prefer not,—for example the dishonesty of Madame de Liron."

"I forbid you to pronounce names! There might be a servant, a maid, some one from her house."

"And do you think servants know nothing of what their mistresses do?"

"It is then unnecessary for you to be relating it."

Visibly disturbed she added: "I don't know why you talk so much about Madame de Liron!"

Uncle Marc looked at her amazed: "I speak of her? Am I speaking now?"

The door of one of the fitting-rooms was

opened and the little Liron entered in a whirl followed by Madame Bertin: she was enveloped in a cloud of rosy gauze.

"They told me that you were here, and I could not let yet you go without a word." She shook hands with the viscount, and turning toward Chiffon said, "How do you do, Miss Coryse?" Then turning to Marc, "Are you here to have a dress made?"

He answered with some embarrassment: "I came for my niece."

The little Liron burst out laughing, opening a mouth somewhat disfigured by defective teeth.

"You are affecting the mamma; it is touching."

Seeing the annoyance of the viscount she hastened to add: "My compliments also! Your daughter is charming!"

Chiffon did not appear to hear. She looked at the young woman with eagerness; she was a very pretty little person, plump and dimpled—her brown hair curled on her forehead with soft, delicate lines. She had large, chocolate-colored eyes, and they were very winning; a good nose and little mouth,

charming when closed, and a superb complexion. Her shoulders were white and plump above her very low bodice. The upper part of her arms were a little coarse, ears large and badly joined to the head, too far from the hair—such as she was, Chiffon understood well that she did not fancy this sort of woman, although Madame de Liron was very pretty and very fascinating.

As Marc said nothing, the young woman continued:

"You are going to have something in pink, I hope? It is the most becoming color to such a skin! And it would at least be polite to tell me how you like my dress?"

He answered, "Quite a success!"

"The way you answer makes it hard to believe! It is for the ball at your sister-in-law's to-morrow. I think we dine together this evening at the Barfleurs'?"

"No; I dine out rarely, and at present I am in mourning."

"That is true! I have not seen you since your return."

"I only came back the day before yesterday, and make no visits."

"I know that!" She took up some material unfolded on the sofa, and in passing before the viscount she said quickly and very low: "But you might see me elsewhere."

Marc glanced at Chiffon, trying to guess if she had heard.

Very white, with closed lips and eyes cast down as a statue, the little girl seemed insensible. A rapid throbbing of the temples alone showed life; and Marc thought, "She has noticed nothing."

Madame de Liron returned after examining the stuffs and asked, "Your brother and sister-in-law dine down there this evening, do they not?"

"My brother is ill; my sister-in-law goes with my niece."

"Oh, if I am not mistaken, Miss Coryse makes her début? I am delighted to dine with her this evening."

Chiffon bowed proudly, thinking, "She isn't like me! Since I know that she will be there it seems to be more of a damper."

Uncle Marc asked Madame Bertin when he could speak to her? he was in a hurry, and wanted a dress for his niece by five o'clock.

The little Liron surrendered the dressmaker, and went into the parlor.

Uncle Marc asked what she could do for him?

She told him that a dress could not be made by five o'clock, but some of the models could be arranged and altered. She said that some were quite fresh. Looking at Coryse, she proposed a little pink dress.

"No!" Chiffon said decidedly, "not pink. I don't wish it!"

Madame de Liron had a few moments before proposed pink to Uncle Marc, and that was enough to turn her from it.

Madame Bertin asked what color she wished.

She replied that any color she liked would answer but pink. She loved white.

One of the women brought in a white mousseline de soie. Madame Bertin opened the door of a room and took Coryse in.

"Will Miss d'Avesnes come in and try on her dress?"

Seeing that Marc remained seated, she asked if he would not come in? Uncle Marc followed the dressmaker and took his seat in

a corner of the fitting-room where Chiffon had already taken off her dress, it having fallen to her feet and leaving her in a little short skirt and silk jersey to which she fastened her stockings. Her old Uncle de Launay, who had always directed her physical education, had never permitted her to wear corsets or garters or boots. He thought they were ugly and unhealthy. Nothing, he thought, so deforms the body as corsets and garters, or so injures the ankle-bone as high boots. He thought the corset and boots might hide imperfections, but the garter never. Chiffon had grown up unrestrained, and when her mother talked about forming her figure with corsets, rebelled heartily. She could not bear the restraint. She preferred the form God had given her, and would not look as if she had swallowed a stick. In thinking of her mother's figure she said:

"I hate a big bust and large hips, with small waist; it is a deformity, a pillow tied in the middle."

When Chiffon had put on the little simple frock with skirts one above the other falling straight from the full waist, draping prettily

her elegant and firm bust, Madame Bertin was delighted.

"How becoming it is to her! There is little to be altered. What a stunning figure! Is it not, sir?"

"Yes," Marc muttered as he beheld Chiffon transformed. In this elegant and correctly made frock, her pretty shoulders firm and rosy, arms though still a little thin, but of beautiful contour, the child appeared so differently from usual that her Uncle Marc said to himself, satisfied and yet annoyed, "They will not know her this evening."

At this moment Madame de Liron opened the parlor door and asked if they needed her advice.

Marc declined coldly, becoming very red.

The young woman saw Coryse in her wonderful transformation, and was petrified by it. Her pretty, laughing face assumed a bad, wild expression, and shutting the door violently said to the viscount, "You are not bored, are you?"

Coryse, half closing her bright eyes, said gently: "Madame de Liron is rather noisy, is she not?"

A quarter of an hour later, when trotting home with Uncle Marc, Chiffon declared, without naming the young woman, that he was thinking of her.

"It makes no difference, she does not bother herself with you," he replied in rather a surly way. "No one disturbs her!"

The little girl shook her head, saying to herself, "Oh, never mind! There are different kinds of love in this world!"

CHAPTER XII.

As Uncle Marc foresaw, Chiffon was scarcely recognized as she entered the Barfleur drawing-room. It was a triumph. Although so distrustful of herself, she could not help noticing the effect she produced. She almost burst out laughing before Madame Bassigny, who gazed at her with an angry and stupid expression.

"It annoys her because I look so well," she thought.

The marchioness was simply dazed at the admiration excited by her daughter. She was not bad at heart, but simply vain and foolish, enjoying to the full anything which contributed to her greatness or brought her into notice. She was flattered by Chiffon's success. Madame Bassigny's long face and also that of the little Liron delighted her. She looked at Chiffon with satisfaction, surrounded by her admirers and receiving their

compliments with a stiffness produced rather by astonishment than timidity.

The Barfleurs noticed this transformation with some disquietude. They thought, if Chiffon would be given them when she was only rich, she might be refused now that she was thought so beautiful. It provoked Madame Barfleur to see M. de Trêne, the handsome Hussar that they had brought out, and M. de Bernay, the delegate, and Count de Liron, the finest match in the country, so assiduous in their attentions to the little Coryse, as she graciously called her. She took her seat near her to watch them.

Chiffon took it amiably. It mattered little to her where she was, as she couldn't talk to Uncle Marc, nor papa, nor to any one she loved.

Her De Lussy cousins were there, Geneviève and her brother, but Coryse cared little for them. Geneviève was a handsome woman, but thoroughly worldly and entirely taken up with all its follies and vanities.

All at once Madame Barfleur heard carriage-wheels in the court.

"Oh! there he is! I thought he had not returned."

Chiffon had seemed indifferent to the arrival of other guests, but showed her surprise on the entrance of the Duke d'Aubières. She was so delighted to see her dear friend that she jumped up to greet him.

"Oh, how charmed I am to see you!"

The colonel looked at her, not fully recognizing this very elegant person who received him so graciously. But when he saw the long hair and the pretty little mouth smiling at him so sweetly, he thought it must be Chiffon before him.

His long, serious face expressed his astonishment so well that Coryse guessed the cause, and said:

"What? don't you recognize me either?"

All at once she noticed that they were observed, and she heard Madame Bassigny whisper to her mother, "She does not seem at all gruff with her cast-off lovers."

Madame de Bray was annoyed at Chiffon's conduct, and replied that she was a perfect baby for her age.

Chiffon thought they were right to criti-

cise her this time, as she had failed in tact.

The Duke d'Aubières was a little out of sorts; he had not expected to meet Chiffon, who went out so little. Above all, he was amazed to see her nearly a woman, so well-dressed and retaining only the long hair on her shoulders, a little remnant of her childish days. But as he looked longer at her he became calmer and more resigned to the renunciation than if he had seen her as she appeared the last time they had met. If he had ever for an instant thought himself near little Chiffon without fortune, he felt himself very far from Miss d'Avesnes who had become rich. She appeared as another incarnation of a being he had formerly loved a long time ago. He examined her with a respectful curiosity, and gradually felt his passion lessening toward her.

"What is the matter with you this evening, colonel?" Madame Bassigny asked. "Are you fatigued from your journey?"

"No, madame; why do you ask?"

"Oh, you look as if something was the matter!"

He bowed: "It is probably a natural expression, but fatigue has nothing to do with it."

Madame Barfleur, who could not, as she ardently wished, place Coryse near her son, desired, however, to escape the neighborhood of the handsome Trêne and M. de Bernay, both in the marriage market and fortune-hunters. She therefore installed the little d'Avesnes between the Duke d'Aubières and M. de Liron, thinking she would be out of danger.

During the dinner Chiffon was delighted at being near the colonel, and talked gayly upon subjects equally interesting to them. They chatted about Uncle Marc, and Gribouille and Joséphine, also about pictures and art generally. The Duke d'Aubières was very intelligent and much more highly cultivated in these matters than most others.

Toward the end of the dinner, when conversation became a little louder and they felt that no one observed them, Chiffon told him in a low tone of the advances of the Barfleurs to her, and of Father Ragon's insinuations,

and of his little manœuvres against which she had to struggle.

The duke asked what her Uncle Marc said to all this?

"Oh, he thinks them idiots, and yet he wished me to dine here this evening, and gave me a new dress to wear. I don't know what is the matter with Uncle Marc, but for some time he seems changed; he is no longer the same with me."

"How is that?"

"I can't explain it to you. He is so strange. He upsets me without my having deserved it—about nothing; but it is something notwithstanding."

"I will go and see him to-morrow. I said good-by the day I ran away, after my dismissal."

"Oh, *à propos* to that—" and Chiffon raised her clear eyes timidly to the duke and asked him if he was angry with her?

He answered that anger was not the word; that he had become wiser, and he thanked her for having been so sensible and kind.

After a moment she said: "You were

coming to see Uncle Marc to-morrow. It is the Sunday of the races."

"Oh yes, but I will come and see Marc in the morning."

"You know there is a ball at the house in the evening? Still another bother! *À propos*, the little prince you introduced to us is very charming; they are giving the ball in his honor."

"So you find my little prince nice?"

"Oh yes, now I do, but at first I thought him a little ordinary; now we have become great friends."

After dinner Madame Barfleur asked Chiffon to serve coffee with her son, and asked her guests if they would permit smoking; in that case they would have the gentlemen with them.

Coryse had hoped the smoking-room would relieve her of "*Two farthings of butter*," whose lover-like manner and veiled phrases annoyed her dreadfully. She made a face and took her seat in the corner, while Geneviève de Lussy, already launched in society and quite a woman of the world, and the little Liron flirted with their admirers and formed a little

group apart. This annoyed Madame de Bray who beckoned to Chiffon to come to her, and in a low tone full of anger told her not to stay any longer in the corner like a simpleton.

"What shall I talk about?"

"Oh, it makes no difference what; you must join in the conversation."

The little girl took her seat much perplexed. She did not understand talking and not saying anything. Always occupied with her studies or childish things, she was not at home in this purely worldly conversation. She remained silent trying to get in a word; then she gave it up, notwithstanding her mother's angry expression. While she was dreaming of Uncle Marc, who at this moment was probably reading his newspapers, or of Gribouille who should be eating his soup, she noticed a movement in the room. They were discussing the authenticity of a portrait of Henry the Fourth which hung opposite the place where she was sitting. Little Barfleur took an enormous lamp which he found hard to carry, and climbing upon a chair tried to throw more light upon the picture. The

king's bony and energetic face seemed to be detached and almost to come out of the old faded canvas.

When Chiffon saw its ugly but fascinating head she exclaimed, "There is a man who had not an atom of Protestantism in him—Henry the Fourth!"

There was perfect silence, and Chiffon remembered at once that the Lirons were Protestants. Wishing to change the conversation she added:

"It's owing to him that I have such a funny name!"

"What!" asked little Barfleur with polite eagerness—"a ridiculous name?"

"Yes—Corysande! didn't you know they called me that?"

"Oh yes, but it is beautiful, on the contrary."

"That depends upon one's taste!"

"What has Henry the Fourth to do with this name you dislike so much?"

"He is the cause without being entirely so; it is in remembrance of the beautiful Corysande."

Seeing that "*Two farthings of butter*" did

not quite understand, she repeated, "The beautiful Corysande? You know about it?"

He answered at random, but without conviction, "Perfectly!"

"You don't seem to understand entirely. She was the Countess of Guiche, and she was the godmother of one of the Avesnes in 1589. Since that time all of the Avesnes have called their daughters Corysande. This is the tradition!"

"This is interesting! but I don't yet see what Henry the Fourth had to do with it."

"I said that you did not seem to understand it. Henry the Fourth had something to do with it, and from the great celebrity of the beautiful Corysande they were flattered in having her for a godmother, and the tradition became established. She is famous, the lovely Corysande, because Henry the Fourth——"

"Yes! Oh yes!" Madame Barfleur chimed in, fearing to see her son's ignorance brought out more to light; although very ignorant herself, she saw her son's danger, and like many women of her stamp possessed the tact of silence.

The Duke d'Aubières looked at the other portraits, and, pointing to a general of the Empire, asked who he was.

"*Two farthings of butter*" looked askance at his ancestor with indifference, a big man leaning on his sword, in the pose of General Fournier-Sarlovège de Gras. "That is my grandfather."

"Oh!" Chiffon cried out, "he does not resemble you;" and looking kindly at General Barfleur she added, "It is not strange that such men should do great things!"

"There was only one misfortune about it," his grandson declared, "it was all done for the glory of Bonaparte."

"For the glory of France, you mean," Chiffon suggested.

"No!" little Barfleur answered, "it was for Bonaparte alone, and Bonaparte will ever be a usurper in the eyes of the world—an enemy of France."

"Did you say in the eyes of men of the world?" Chiffon's ears were red with excitement. "The emperor an enemy of France? Those who returned from Coblentz have dared to call him this. Those who would

have rejoiced to have seen France invaded and to reach a very fine result—Louis the Eighteenth!"

Little Barfleur declared warmly, happy in being able to find a subject for conversation: "Louis the Eighteenth was a great king!"

"A great king!—this goldbeater's skin? but you care nothing for that. You are only a black-heart cherry at the bottom. You defend the king as you go to mass, a thing of fashion. It is not fashionable to be an Imperialist, they are all snares and bullies."

"Thanks for the Imperialists, Miss Coryse," the Duke d'Aubières said laughingly, bowing toward her.

Madame de Bray ran up to Chiffon, and in a low but threatening tone told her to stop talking in that foolish manner.

"This doesn't surprise me! but why do they amuse themselves in bedaubing my emperor? And besides, you have told me to talk, no matter what I said, only to talk."

Distressed lest her young heir should embark in another conversation, Madame de Barfleur took her seat at the piano. A dance, she thought, would be pleasant.

At once the handsome Trêne, M. de Bernay, and Count de Liron ran toward Chiffon; but little Barfleur being nearer seized the young girl quickly.

Coryse rather repelled this arm around her waist, and looked toward the duke to come to her aid; but she thought quickly that this would be of no avail, as her vague notions of politeness made her think it necessary to dance at least once with the master of the house.

If the descendant of the Barfleurs talked badly he waltzed well, and Chiffon took great pleasure in being whirled across the big drawing-room. Her partner took her into the gallery, in which, though badly lighted, he thought they would have more room. Chiffon looked for the other dancers, Geneviève de Lussy and Madame de Liron.

The viscount stopped a moment and went toward the door to call them, and reported that they were coming.

Taking Chiffon they danced off again. They remained alone, however, in the big room. Madame de Liron only loved to waltz before people, and Madame de Lussy

understood her daughter so well that she did not permit her to go far away from the maternal eye.

"Madame de Liron is thought very pretty, is she not?" Chiffon asked. Since the morning the image of the young woman haunted her and she couldn't help talking about her.

Little Barfleur replied in an absent way: "Your Uncle de Bray thinks her very pretty!"

"Ah!" Corsye said gravely.

"But what do you think of her, Miss Coryse?"

"A little too rapid; what do you think?"

"I?" "*Two farthings of butter*" answered, pressing Coryse a little against his shoulder, "I see you only. You are so pretty! so perfectly lovely!" and he added in a low tone, "it is you that I love!"

Chiffon did not quite understand, and abandoned herself entirely to the pleasure of dancing with a fine waltzer.

Emboldened by this, he leaned toward her, whispering in a tone which he tried to make passionate: "I love you!"

He was so near her that his breath seemed to blow away her hair. She stopped short, stupefied, and turning away abruptly with an amazed and indignant look, said:

"This is indeed rapid! A little steep!"

CHAPTER XIII.

"WILL you say to Corysande that she must come to the races? She declares that she does not wish to go." The marchioness ran into the library where M. de Bray and Marc were smoking, with this complaint.

Chiffon came in behind her mother, saying that she did not wish to go, as she had never been urged to do so before.

"No, but you were then a child."

The marquis thought he would speak to her: "Go, my Chiffon, you love horses so much."

"It is just because I love horses that I hate races. It doesn't amuse me to see one kick about with a broken foot, as at Auteuil, two years ago, the day you took me."

"But an accident like that may not happen."

"Like that or any other, it makes no difference to me. It is not for that alone that I don't wish to go to the races."

"You should not say, 'I don't wish,'" M. de Bray said kindly.

Chiffon corrected herself, "I should prefer not to go to the races."

"Why is that?"

"Because it bores me to be among such a lot of people. I love to be alone—with my animals; or with you two. I am in earnest! This morning it was mass; in a short time the races; this evening a ball. It is too much for one day, all this."

Madame de Bray raised her eyes to heaven: "Mass! she puts mass in the same bag with the rest!"

Chiffon, bristling with anger, answered:

"Yes, certainly. This morning you would not allow me to go to Saint Marcien, giving as a pretext that you needed John at the house for the evening preparations. Well? You took me with you to the Jesuits, and their mass is not like a mass! it is like a five o'clock reception, which is in the morning. They greet each other, wait in the garden until everybody goes out. To-day you have spoken to more than fifty people!"

"But you spoke to them also, why do you complain?"

"It is just this which I dislike!"

"I can't understand being bored with society."

"This depends upon one's taste! I have a horror of it! Seeing them this morning and again to-night is enough for me. I will have had my fill of society without being dragged to the races. If I am annoyed all day in this way I will go to sleep in the drawing-room to-night."

The marchioness was discouraged: "This child is perfectly incorrigible. I must give up trying to do anything with her!" She left the room in a huff.

Chiffon stretched herself on the divan like a big dog. "It is all the same to me, her whims!"

M. de Bray told her he could not understand why she would not go with her mother to the races.

"You will understand if you will go with her."

"I have a frightful cold and am scarcely presentable here."

"And I am disgusted with my dinner yesterday!"

Uncle Marc then asked how the dinner went off.

"Oh as much of a bore as ever! but fortunately M. d'Aubières was there; but for that I don't know how I could have borne it."

"Oh!" the marquis asked, "so d'Aubières has returned?"

"Yes," Uncle Marc answered, "he came this morning when you were out. He wanted to see you, and excused himself for not returning the other evening to say good-by to your wife and yourself; but he was not in spirits, poor man, after his walk with Chiffon in the garden. Do you know what Chiffon said to him in this walk? Don't try to guess; you never can. She said very prettily to him, 'I want you to know why I can't marry you. I don't wish it, because I am sure that I would deceive you.'"

M. de Bray began to laugh also, but Coryse shrugged her shoulders.

"So you find this funny, do you? I suppose it would have been better for him to have imagined a lot of other things."

"Indeed," Uncle Marc answered, "I don't think you could have said anything worse."

She asked him gravely: "Do you think he wants to marry me now?"

"He! poor man, he does not even dream of it!"

"That is a lucky thing! I thought so! He was so nice during the dinner. I was just in the humor to be near him!"

"Well, it is all over now?"

"But my mother has not told you."

"I have not seen her since breakfast, and we did not talk of the dinner."

"Well, I ran on a little, first about Henry the Fourth."

"What did you have to say about him?" M. de Bray asked with quite a surprised expression.

"They were looking at his portrait and I said that he had not a particle of the Protestant in him. Then you know—on account of the Lirons that was a great mistake."

"Oh," Uncle Marc answered, "if you had not said that!"

"Well, I said other things also—but it is all my mother's fault. She called me to her and

said I must talk even if I said nothing; and as soon as I found something she jumped upon me."

"Well, let us hear the second mistake?" Uncle Marc asked with great interest.

"Well, it was not exactly that, but I was angry and said things I should not. It was *à propos* of Napoleon."

"Oh!" M. de Bray said, "if they attacked *Napoleon*——"

"Yes, they did, and that made me more angry."

"Did you lose your temper?"

"Well, I don't know;" and after a silence she added, "I behaved better than the master of the house."

"What do you mean by this? I thought M. de Barfleur was the perfection of good manners."

"Not with me—always."

"What has he done?"

Blushing at the recollection of the evening before, and bristling with anger, she said, "He has spoken too affectionately to me."

"How is that?" Uncle Marc asked.

"Well, he said *thee* and *thou* to me; it hap-

pened while we were waltzing. He took me in the gallery, pretending that we had not room enough in the ball-room. Then he began to say that Madame de Liron was a little fast,—no, I am mixing up things; I said this to him. He told me that I was pretty, that I alone was beautiful——"

As she then became silent Uncle Marc questioned her further: "And then?"

"Then all at once he leaned toward me and—" imitating the voice of little Barfleur —"whispered with all his concentrated passion: '*I love thee!*'"

Her intonation was so funny that Uncle Marc, in spite of annoyance, began to laugh.

Coryse was a little wounded, and turning toward him and her step-father she said: "You think this funny, do you?"

M. de Bray, always anxious to conciliate, said in a mild tone: "The English say thee and thou to God!"

Chiffon answered boldly, "Because they are muzzled!"

"Oh, very well!" the marquis said, a little annoyed at the poor success of his observation, "you have your own way of talking."

After thinking a moment she asked if this joking was going to continue.

Her step-father not understanding, she answered, "About little Barfleur. I don't want to make a serious matter of it, but I am not flattered at your thinking that I might marry *Two farthings of butter!*"

The marquis timidly whispered, "He is nice!"

"Nice—yes, but so grotesque and unhealthy looking, and dresses peculiarly, and perfumes himself with white heliotrope; that is enough!"

"Why! a man can sometimes use a little perfume without all that."

"No," Chiffon declared, "a man has no right to smell of anything but tobacco." Turning to Uncle Marc she said:

"You are laughing! You think this all very funny? You above all are joining the others in being unkind to me—yes, unkind! This began a long time ago, but lately it has increased. Since the evening when this detestable little Barfleur dined at the house."

As the viscount protested, she continued in the most excited way: "Oh, I don't say that

"You must pardon me; it is instinctive." you are not kind to me! in giving me dresses and beautiful presents. You gave me the lovely frock that I am going to wear this evening; it is a great deal more stylish than the one papa gave me. Yes—you give me things, but when it comes to loving me!—that is much more!"

"But I do."

"No, you don't! if you loved me, could you be willing to see me marry a monkey like little Barfleur?"

"But I never said anything about this."

"You said nothing for it, but nothing against it, and I don't wish to marry a monkey." She walked toward Uncle Marc and went on to say bitterly:

"It is your fault then, tormenting me; if they wish to marry me—yes, it is the fault of your dirty money! but for that they would let me be quiet in my little corner as before."

Hiding her face in her hands she sobbed convulsively.

"Let her alone," Marc said to his brother, as he approached the little girl and wanted

to talk to her. "She is nervous; let her cry a little—it will do her good."

As the marquis left the library he paused, and, seeing Chiffon still crying, he said: "This nervous attack is a new thing for this child! If she was in love with some one I would not be surprised!"

"You are foolish," Marc said with some bewilderment. "Who could she be in love with? Can't be Trêne, that perfectly insipid fellow who would beat his wife and throw away her fortune; nor Bernay—she hates hypocrites. Nor Liron, an idiot!"

As his brother was silent he asked excitedly, "Who!—who is it?"

M. de Bray answered coldly: "How can I tell?"

CHAPTER XIV.

"WHERE has Uncle Marc gone?" Chiffon asked on entering the drawing-room in the evening, a few moments before the arrival of the guests. "I have looked for him everywhere and can't find him."

"You know," the marquis told her, "that he is not visible this evening. What do you want him for?"

"I want to show him my new dress. He has only seen it in the daylight, and, bless me! in the evening I look so much better!"

"You can show it to him another time; he is out of sorts this evening." He added laughingly, "It seems to me that everybody is nervous to-day."

"Yes," Coryse said, "I noticed his mood at dinner. What do you think is the cause?"

The marchioness accused him of having a bad temper.

"Oh!" Chiffon protested with animation,

"that is not so!" Returning to her idea, she thought she would hunt him up.

Her mother said "No!" angrily. "The guests have begun to arrive."

The bright face of the little girl was clouded.

"Yes, you are right; it is ten o'clock. I wonder who it is who has come first? I bet it is that old bore Bassigny!"

It was Madame Bassigny, squeezed in a brilliant silvery dress; followed by the colonel tightly belted, also, in a uniform a little narrow for him, and which made a crease in his back up to his shoulders. Madame Bassigny seemed annoyed at being the first to arrive. She thought it unfashionable, and threw it all on the colonel.

In a very marked way she asked Coryse if her political discussion the evening before had prevented her from sleeping.

The little girl replied that she had slept well, and always did, even after the most stupid evening.

The arrival of other guests interrupted this conversation, which had taken a little disagreeable turn.

Little Barfleur entered, clinging to the skirts of his mother and evidently uneasy at the result of his proposal. He thought that he had been too passionate and would change his conduct a little.

The indifferent manner in which Chiffon received him, evidently having forgotten it all, reassured him, and recovering his aplomb he ran about the rooms, filling them with his roppish and small personality.

The entrance of Count d'Axen had the effect of a shower-bath upon him. He began by examining him closely, and with great respect, somewhat overwhelmed by the presence of a genuine prince. Soon, however, he forgot the prince and saw only a rival. The arrival of this gentleman, younger and handsomer than himself, lowered considerably his prestige.

When the orchestra began, *Two farthings of butter* ran up to Coryse, but at the moment she was whirled away by Count d'Axen. He clearly saw to his distress that the prince danced the three-step waltz wonderfully, as the men of his country all do. Not only would he be the honored guest, but also the

most distinguished, and moreover he fully merited all the attention he would receive.

All this gave little Barfleur pain. He ran up to Madame de Liron, who had just arrived, followed by her husband and brother-in-law. She was brilliant and delicious in the rose-colored frock which had been seen at the dressmaker's. He eagerly asked for a waltz.

But the little Liron was anxious above everything to have her *entree* noticed by Count d'Axen, and knowing that small men do not show off women, especially in the dance, she replied in a somewhat sharp tone to his unseasonable eagerness:

"Soon I will dance with you! I have just come. Let me breathe a little!" Then turning toward the marquis, she said: "Is it really so, that that bear of a brother of yours is not here?"

"Really so!"

"And won't he appear at all?"

"Not this evening."

She raised her eyes to the ceiling: "He is up there; above all this noise?"

"It is so."

"What is that to her," Chiffon thought,

"where he is?" as she gazed at the young woman looking so brilliant and fresh under her diadem of diamonds. Nothing in this plump doll with roguish eyes and somewhat vulgar lines pleased Chiffon. But on seeing the enthusiasm excited by the little Liron she tried to understand this admiration which she could not explain. "She does look very pretty!"

The Duke d'Aubières came up to speak to her.

"What are you thinking about, Miss Coryse? You look like a little conspirator!"

Coryse blushed and answered, "Nothing."

"Ah, now you have a preoccupied look—I would say gloomy, if this dreadful black word could apply to you."

When the little girl stammered an insignificant reply, he asked affectionately:

"Has something distressed you? Has something happened that is not as you wish?"

"Oh no! I have no sorrow—nothing," Chiffon said earnestly. Wishing to end these rather embarrassing questions, she began in her turn:

"Uncle Marc's election is certain, is it not?"

"I think so! but he does not seem to care much about it! I saw him this morning, and he didn't say three words about it. He seemed to forget that to-morrow is Sunday. He also has a preoccupied look!"

"Ah!" the little girl uttered with a distressed expression, and she thought at once, "It is probably Madame de Liron who fills his thoughts."

The colonel noticed Coryse's vague expression and the compression of her lips.

"Oh, you are far away from here now, Miss Chiffon! Very far away in the blue country."

She answered without knowing how exactly, "Oh, not so blue as all that."

They were gradually nearing a big bay window opening on the garden. A storm seemed to be coming up; a leaden heat overcame them.

"They are stifling in there!" Chiffon said, shaking her heavy hair. She went out, followed by M. d'Aubières.

"Look there," the duke said, his nose in the air, "there he is—that animal Marc! he

walks about his room forgetting that we can see him down here."

Chiffon looked up and saw her Uncle Marc's tall silhouette which stood out from the bright frame of the window.

"Oh yes! there he is."

Madame de Liron came into the garden on the arm of M. de Bray. She also saw the viscount. She said impulsively, "What a good joke it would be to go up and see your brother! What do you think of it?"

"I don't know," the marquis replied with a little embarrassment.

"Oh, let us do it, it would be great fun to go up in a provincial fashion."

Turning to the colonel: "Will you, M. d'Aubières?"

"Oh no, madame. I would be afraid that my friend Marc would show me the door."

"And would he put me out also?"

Without waiting for an answer she turned toward M. de Bray:

"If I go up very quietly by the library steps it would be fun—hey!"

"Excellent!" Chiffon said in rather an impertinent tone.

"M. de Bray, do take me up, won't you?"

"I must do so many things here, madame," much embarrassed by her importunity, "but the Duke d'Aubières will conduct you to the staircase with pleasure;" and the duke offered his arm.

Coryse remained alone.

The handsome Trêne, looking so slight in his uniform of the Hussars, came down the steps!

"At last I can bow to you, Miss d'Avesnes!"

Chiffon, who was running away to follow M. d'Aubières and Madame de Liron, was somewhat annoyed at being stopped in her flight.

She answered a little disagreeably: "You have bowed to me before."

She spoke a little loud. Uncle Marc's silhouette disappeared a moment, came on the balcony, and there remained motionless.

"I did bow to you when I came in, but did not compliment you upon your beautiful frock."

Coryse didn't answer, and he went on in a mysterious way full of innuendo and nonsense: "After all, is it the toilette which is

pretty? I won't pay you a foolish compliment in saying what you have heard a hundred times since yesterday evening; but you are——"

Chiffon interrupted him, laughing: "Oh yes, charming! everybody agrees to that!"

Anxious to slip away she added a little brusquely: "If that is all you have to say——"

M. de Trêne answered, "I wanted to beg for a waltz?"

"Which one?"

"Any that you will deign to give me? the first if you can."

"The first is for Count d'Axen."

"What; another?"

"Do you count the number of dances I give each man?" Coryse asked.

She stopped suddenly. It seemed to her as if Uncle Marc was leaning over the balcony listening, but she did not dare to look up, indicating her thoughts.

The handsome Trêne went on to engage the second waltz.

"That is M. d'Aubières'; do you want the fourth? I must go now."

The Count d'Axen came running up: "It is my waltz, Miss Chiffon!"

At the window Uncle Marc's tall shadow moved uneasily, and Coryse thought: "I bet at this moment he is angry."

M. de Trêne asked to have the honor of being presented to his lordship the Count d'Axen.

Chiffon regretted being obliged to take her eyes away from the window, but turning toward the prince presented M. de Trêne.

"I am very glad to meet you, sir," and the Count d'Axen in shaking hands told him that in the coming week they would be comrades in the same regiment.

"I have been asked to come to the manœuvres, and I will march with you."

Taking Chiffon by the waist he asked her to take a turn on the grass; they could hear the music, and it was stifling in the drawing-room.

She danced off with him, not liking to refuse, but fearing, not knowing why, that it would displease Uncle Marc, who remained motionless on the balcony.

When they stopped dancing the prince said

to Coryse how much he regretted not seeing her uncle.

"He is in mourning and has remained in his room," she replied, looking furtively toward the window.

"What a charming man! I like him so much! We were often together in rides and walks."

"What!" the little girl thought, surprised, "he has never told me this; he has not spoken of him since the other evening."

Count d'Axen continued: "M. de Bray has the finest mind I know."

"And a beautiful soul: has he not, my lord?" and Chiffon felt as if she could embrace the prince.

"I will be so glad," he continued, "if the manœuvres will come off soon enough for me to go away with him?"

"Go away? Where?" the little girl asked in her agony.

"Hasn't he told you?"

"Yes—yes—a little."

"Well, soon after the elections M. de Bray is going to travel for two months."

"Ah!"

"He wishes to look more closely into the miseries of the poor—in a word, he wants to do good. Miss Chiffon, your uncle is one of those rare men who spend their lives in doing good which they hide as crimes."

"Yes; I have told him so!" trying to master herself to keep from crying. The thought of Uncle Marc's going away completely upset her. On his return, if he is elected he would go to Paris, where the Brays would not establish themselves until the spring. She would never see him again! Never again!

At this moment the viscount leaned over the balcony, returning suddenly to his room. Evidently some one had just come in.

"It is she!" thought Chiffon, her heart beating violently.

When the waltz ended she bowed to the prince and made her way through the dancers who were taking their places. On reaching the library she climbed the oaken stairway which led directly to the apartment of the viscount. She was determined to see, to listen, to know at any hazard what was taking place; but all at once she stopped, discouraged. "No!" she thought, "this would be

disgraceful! and then I know all that I can know!"

A rustling of tulle and silk warned her that some one was coming down above her, almost falling down the steps. She squatted down behind the staircase. Gaudy and flaunting Madame de Liron passed near her and entered the ball-room, exclaiming, to show that her visit was not a secret:

"Ah! what do you think? he was not pleased, think of it! It would be nearer the truth to say that he was not very angry!"

"She lies," Chiffon thought, "he was delighted! She says that to prevent their thinking this;" and going up to the viscount's room she opened the door without knocking.

Seated near his dressing-table, leaning his head on his arm, Uncle Marc did not hear her enter. In a trembling voice she asked angrily:

"What has she done to you?"

On hearing the voice of his niece he got up, somewhat annoyed.

"What are you doing here—you?"

When she saw the poor, distressed face

turning threateningly toward her, Chiffon felt only a great pity for the uncle she loved so dearly. She forgot everything, repeating, surprised and deeply grieved: "Why do you cry? why, *mon Dieu!*" and timidly, "is it on her account?"

The viscount burst out laughing.

"I don't know who you mean, but I beg you to return to your dances and flirtations. Go and listen to the compliments of that brute de Trêne, and waltz in the garden with Count d'Axen, if that amuses you; but let me be quiet in my room."

She whispered, "Quiet! and weeping?"

"I will cry if that amuses me."

Chiffon saw in the dressing-room two big trunks open. Doting on him she asked:

"You go then sooner?"

"Sooner than what? And how did you know that I was going?"

"It was Count d'Axen who——"

He laughed. "Oh, you speak of me when you are together?"

"Yes! he told me that you were going to travel to do good."

As he did not answer, she asked in a trem-

bling voice which showed all her fears: "What is to become of me?"

Without looking at her he answered brusquely:

"Bless me! You don't think that I can take you away with me? or stay here to be your nurse?"

"Oh!" Chiffon said in her agony, while her periwinkle eyes were veiled with tears, "how you speak to me, Uncle Marc! how dreadfully you talk to me!"

"Then why did you come to worry me in this way?"

She stood a moment without replying, motionless in the middle of the room, rosy in the cloudy dress which fell in straight lengths from her hips, showing the pure lines of her young and strong little body. The shower of blonde hair which floated around her, flying away by the draught from the window, made her look like a little fairy, strange and unreal.

In spite of himself, Marc, who had raised his head, looked at her with an expression of great tenderness from the bottom of his red eyes.

Too near-sighted to see this look, after reflecting some time Chiffon asked:

"Then from what the prince tells me you are going away from here to do good."

He shrugged his shoulders.

The little girl continued:

"I can tell you one to do, and not far away —a fine good thing?"

As he made no reply she whispered in stifled tones: "It would be to marry me."

Becoming very pale the viscount walked toward her! "What is it you say?"

"You understood perfectly."

He answered in a hoarse voice: "That is cruel joking—and not funny."

"Joking?" Chiffon cried out in a bewildered manner; "I love you more than all the world, and there are moments when it seems to me that you love me more than others. Then I say to you, marry me!"

Uncle Marc took the little girl in his arms.

"My Chiffon! Oh yes, I love you! I love you! I love you!"

"Then do you wish it much?"

He covered her with kisses without speaking.

She sighed trembling: "Oh! how sweet it is to be kissed by you!" Then bursting out with laughter, "Do you think they will make a face downstairs when they know this?"

Uncle Marc looked at Chiffon, hesitating to believe her his. Pressing his face to hers, he whispered in a kiss:

"Ah, little Chiffon, if you only knew how unhappy I have been! And despairing! and jealous!"

"Jealous? Oh, that was not necessary!"

Throwing herself passionately into his arms, she whispered winningly and tenderly:

"It would be a terrible surprise to me if I could ever deceive you!"

THE END.

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